WHAT THE CHURCH IS AND WHAT IT SHOULD BE

LAFAYETTE SWINDLE

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BY

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What the Church Is and What It Should Be

CHAPTER I.

THE HOME OF TRUTH.

Settlesburg was one of the first towns to be incorporated in this country. Because its population consisted of the most far-seeing and enterprising of the early colonists, their judgment prompted them to select a central and productive location for their settlement, and while their environment would have compelled them to put forth their best efforts, still these particular citizens were naturally industrious and did not have to be prompted by force of circumstances or anything else to labor.

But now being so far from their mother country and in a somewhat precarious attitude toward her, they naturally became doubly energetic. They did everything that was in their power to do to develop their immediate part of the new country. They erected temporary homes, felled the timber, plowed the ground, grew harvests, established stores, schools and churches.

Leander Gross was a citizen of this town. He was easily the most powerful man of the settlement and

—he knew it, and in spite of his many good traits, the fact of his great physical strength made him just a little impatient, if not overbearing, at times.

There were others who were just as ambitious as he and fully as daring, and Leander Gross could show more than one scar as the effect of their efforts to make up for their own lack of physical strength by the use of weapons.

He was not a scholar, but possessed so much native ability as indicated him a natural born leader of men, and was interested in everything that had any tendency to advance the town and improve social conditions.

Although he was not a scholar, as aforesaid, and had always looked upon it as a misfortune, yet he was determined that others, especially his own children, should not be put to the same disadvantage, if timely and vigorous efforts on his part could prevent it, so he insisted upon long terms of school and the securing of the very best of teachers, cost what it might. "The best qualified teachers are the cheapest at double salary," was one of his favorite expressions.

Although he was not a Christian, still he was one of the first to suggest the erection of a church building, and one of the largest contributors in time, labor and means.

"Mr. Gross, why are you so much interested in the church, since you are not a member?" said Hampton Kelly, the minister, one day, as Mr. Gross was insisting most enthusiastically that the church be completed at once and paid for.

"Mr. Kelly," said he, "I have always tried to make it a point to act a shade wiser than I look. Hereafter, will you do me the kindness to judge me by my actions, and not by my personal appearance? For I have either discovered it myself, or some one has

told me—anyway, I know that a community is much better off with a church than without one."

As the years went by, many towns were established; the lands from town to town in all directions were developed, and the population became so great that the children, many of them, had to emigrate to parts more distant. The old homestead was ample for the father and mother and their ten children—the size of families they usually had in those days—so long as the children remained single. But it was not sufficient for ten families.

Mr. Kelly was not only a preacher of rare ability, one who understood the Scriptures as few men do, or are capable of doing, but he was a business man (rare combination) as well. Not that he was simply able to look after his own financial interests successfully, but he devised, manipulated, superintended and carried to success systems looking to the alleviation of the suffering of the poor of the church, town and community.

Jacob Ashberry was one of a family of seven children, whose father was dead and the widow was as poor as it was possible for any one to be, so far as this world's goods are concerned. She frequently had not one day's rations ahead. Her son, Jacob, when a boy, was frequently known to go barefooted through the snow for a quarter of a mile to his traps. This fact would suggest to even a casual observer, determination, courage, and true greatness of character, but he said, in after life, that the children owed all their success to their mother; that if she had not been a woman of rare wisdom, she never could have been able to cope with so difficult a situation.

As Jacob stood fully six feet high and weighed two hundred pounds, and had a classic brow, the student's eye, the mouth of the orator and the under jaw

of the bulldog, the Superior Judge was asked by some one: "Who is the ablest man who pleads at your bar?"

"Oh, Jacob Ashberry," said he; "for, in the first place, he is an indefatigable worker. In the second place, he is a prodigious student; and, in the third place, he is as fine an orator as ever appeared before judge or jury." To illustrate, a man was charged with perjury. Mr. Ashberry was retained to prosecute him. A brilliant lawyer, with a wide reputation, was called upon to come three hundred miles to defend him. As the other lawyer was from a town much larger, at this time, than the town in which Ashberry resided, he took it for granted that he would have an easy time of clearing the man, and so expressed himself; but when Ashberry carried everything before him and had the man sentenced to the state prison for a term of ten years, the defeated lawyer offered him a copartnership in his own law firm, so impressed was he with his opponent's abilities.

In his old days, Jacob's one regret was that he had never married, and as he had no children of his own, in whom to interest himself, he naturally became interested in the children of others.

Jacob Ashberry, Hampton Kelly and Leander Gross were the first to observe the absolute necessity for emigration, make a study of the regions beyond, and urge the younger men to move out. But it was Mr. Ashberry's ready pen and eloquent tongue that finally inspired James Gross (Leander Gross' youngest son) and many others to emigrate, investigate, and, later, locate. These three moving spirits often said that if they were not so awfully old they would move out themselves.

* * * * * * * *

But for one thing, which will come to the surface as the reader peruses the pages of this book, possibly the town of Bidwell, established by these first emigrants from Settlesburg, would never have made a city of any note, although it might have been found on the various maps, at any time, by diligent geographers.

Several decades past, a few Eastern men, who had made wonderful progress toward what their then small world called success, and possessing enterprise beyond that of their fellows, got some of their effects together, took their lives in their own hands, and started for parts unknown.

They left their wives with a feeling akin to that of those whose husbands go to battle. And woe betide the deer, turkey, or game of any kind that appeared in front of their unerring rifles when food was needed.

They continued their journey to what they then called the Far West, but which is now almost the center of what is called the Middle West. They selected a beautiful valley, through which flowed a rippling, rollicking stream; and, as they sat before their camp-fires of an evening, they would talk of the probable values of such lands, should they ever become as densely populated as the section whence they had journeyed, and feeling confident that it would, some time, they proceeded to stake off claims and erect cabins.

They then sent some of their party after their families, while others guarded the claims. Upon their return, they found that they had not only brought their own families, but that others had joined them. Every year brought more and more, till the settlement demanded a store, where they could, at least, exchange the products of their lands for groceries.

Recognizing this fact, one of the above-mentioned pioneers took it upon himself to meet this demand, which he did, although he had to haul his supplies three hundred miles at first, then two hundred, then one hundred, and so on.

As the line of progress and civilization widened, the citizens of Bidwell became more and more enthused. They increased their acreage, erected more substantial buildings, and, characteristic of instinctive business men, those in authority, at no small expense, platted a future city, with its broad streets, boulevards, parks, square, plots for state and government buildings, setting apart the most commanding places for the latter. They were well prepared to accommodate a population of many tens of thousands more than had already arrived.

So bitter was the opposition of those who could not see so far ahead, that they succeeded in unseating some of those in authority, but could not dislodge all. A sufficient number was allowed to remain to keep the officers-elect from undoing the work of their predecessors.

A plat for so large a city, at present clear beyond the limits of necessity, made Bidwell a laughing stock and a subject for comic remarks by all who chanced to come that way, and especially by those who would not venture that far from home, and, hence, had only heard or read of this town.

While all of those who came first were just as full of enterprise and as aggressive as was possible, still Judge Gross was always the dominant spirit in all things pertaining to matters of progress. Of course, a man of his progressive and aggressive nature, and so unerringly certain of success in all his undertakings, would necessarily meet with great opposition

from time to time, and would be profoundly hated by those who differed from him.

But all, friend and foe, when they had legal matters to attend to, would, almost to a man, go to the judge, for they all said, "When Judge Gross attends to it, we know, to say the least, that it is done legally."

But, by and by, just as the judge and those associated with him had anticipated by tongue and pen, the line of progress and civilization not only struck Bidwell, but extended far to the north, south and westward, leaving Bidwell installed as the county seat and capital of the newly-formed state, with its splendid pressed-brick courthouse, stone state and government buildings, and making phenomenal progress toward the great city provided for in the original plat of many years ago.

And now, it is no longer Judge Gross, but Governor Gross, for when the new state was formed, the citizens turned as naturally to him for their first governor as the tender plant turns and reaches out for the first rays of the bright and brilliant morning sun; and they would have elected him again and again, had not the burden of years, prodigious study, and indefatigable labors begun to tell on him so much, not because they loved him, and hence sought him socially, but because of his unchallenged honesty and thorough competency, which he had demonstrated in everything that he had ever undertaken.

But, in spite of it all, there seemed to be a dissatisfaction and an unhappiness in his own heart that he could not possibly suppress. It manifested itself in his walk and talk, and seemed to have stamped itself upon his very physiognomy. This made him personally repulsive and forbidding to every one, and made every one repulsive and forbidding to him. He seemed to love no one, and no one seemed to love him, yet

every one sought him when they needed him, and he sought them when he needed their services.

But there was a great lack of some important thing —there was a great, aching void in his own heart, and hence, an apparently impassable gulf between himself and the people. What was it? He himself could not tell, neither could the people. All that he knew was that he despised the people, and all that the people knew was that they despised him.

Notwithstanding this apparently impassable gulf, no man in all the city of Bidwell was consulted more and knew more of the private affairs of church and family than did Governor Gross. The lawyers, doctors, preachers, elders, deacons, bankers, merchants, husbands, wives, the employer and employé, the moral and the immoral, the proclaimer of righteousness and the perpetrators of unrighteousness—all came to Governor Gross when they were in trouble.

He was one of the first acorns, so to speak, that had been planted in the virgin soil of Bidwell, and he had weathered the storms of pioneer life, of ridicule and of opposition of every possible description, and, as some one great oak stands out conspicuously the monarch of the forest, so Governor Gross stood out conspicuously as the intellectual monarch of the community.

He had a splendid ten-room residence, the first story of which was made of granite and the second of cream pressed brick. The barn was commensurate with the residence, and both had a proportionate inclosure surrounded by an iron fence of unique design and set to grass, a variety of flowers, trees of many kinds, walks, driveways and fountains, and situated on the corner of Orange and Crescent streets, both prominent thoroughfares of the city.

But now, Governor Gross has received a number of

unmistakable physical warnings that he must cease from his labors and retire absolutely from his public activities. Anticipating this for some years past, he had spared neither time nor means in giving his son Nevin a finished education and abundant preparation for taking up the work where he would be compelled to lay it down.

And, since his retirement, one can pass his residence at any time and be most certain to see him sitting or standing on the veranda or on the lawn, not glorying in his great success in life, as one would naturally suppose, but brooding over an absolute essential, which he did not possess, and could not acquire, for the reason that he did not know what it was, and hence did not know how to seek for it. It was the only bitterness in his otherwise gloriously successful life.

CHAPTER II.

A GLIMMERING.

If ever there was a young man who was prepared to take upon himself great responsibilities, Nevin Gross was that man. Physically, he was one to inspire every lover of his race with pride. He had a powerful frame, broad and close-lain muscles, with life and health permeating his every fiber, and his splendid body was dominated by a mind and spirit that made him dearer to his mother than her own life, but puzzled his father and made him somewhat apprehensive.

To the supreme satisfaction of his father, this only son possessed that mental acumen which enabled him, with apparently little effort, to grasp every direct

and remote truth connected with whatever was brought before him for investigation.

Then, by placing two large, expressive, blue eyes upon a person, he had the happy faculty of compelling him to speak the truth with fullness, and to hesitate, if not refuse absolutely, to speak that which is false. Even opposing attorneys could not help but cower, somewhat, under the power of those eyes, when they were attempting to exaggerate or minimize things in order to carry out their own furtive purposes.

He never appeared in an important case but what his aged father was there to see and hear the son of whom he was justly proud. He was a finished scholar, almost a prodigy in the use of language, and had the voice of a trained artist. These, together with his splendid physique and imposing personal appearance, made him one before the strength of whose logic and the power of whose eloquence no judge or jury on earth could scarcely stand.

One evening after one of the most masterful efforts that it had ever been his father's privilege to hear, and one of the most important victories that he had ever seen won, the father had preceded the son to the home by an hour and was sitting on the veranda where the vines, together with the massive column, around which they were twined, would shut out the sun, which was now sending his horizontal rays through every opening and into every niche and corner that would admit light, with wonderful power, just before disappearing behind the western horizon.

The son came walking along leisurely, apparently looking upon all that had happened as a matter of course.

"Son," said the father, "I have listened to men plead at the bar for the last fifty years, but I must say that yours to-day was the most masterful effort that

I have ever heard. Now, son, I want you to tell me where you ever learned so much, and how you can use it so skillfully when the time comes? Why, you simply had all the facts, figures, names, dates and all, upon your tongue's end. Besides, I have never in all my life, with my natural eyes and ears, seen the mountains, flowers, the setting of the sun as it throws its various shades of crimson, blue and light, look more beautiful, or heard the rippling of the brooks plainer, or the birds sing sweeter than I did in your wonderful effort to-day. How is it?"

"Father, I don't know that there is anything especially mysterious about it, for I have always been a student of these things, and when I appear in defence of the right—and I will give up my practice before I will defend that which is not right—why, under the inspiration of the occasion, everything that I have ever heard, seen or read, pertaining to the question to be settled, seems to pass before my mind in such bold relief that all that I have to do is to cull thunderbolts and hurl them at them."

"Son, it certainly does appear that way."

"And how is my good mother, this evening?" he said, as he met her at the inner door, and threw his strong arms about her, and kissed her.

"Oh, I am all right, and happy, too, over the fine showing that my son made to-day."

"Yes, mother, I have been an obedient son to-day. I have at least made an honest effort to do my duty, as you always told me to do."

"Doesn't it beat all!" said the father to the mother, entering the room, the son having passed on to prepare for dinner. "He will gain a decision, earn a thousand dollars, and so completely electrify the whole city that I verily believe that the people would literally carry him about upon their shoulders, if he would

let them, and still he seems to be utterly oblivious to the meaning of his success or the appreciation of the people."

"Say, Ben, if you will have Roanoke ready, we will take a spin after dinner," he called to the old negro hostler, as he crossed the hall, between the wash-room and the dining-room.

"Yaas, suh; yaas, suh," responded Ben.

Joe and Dan, the fine pedigreed and thoroughly trained setters, that were apparently sleeping as soundly as men in bed at a very late hour, by instinct heard their master's voice, and, springing to their feet, made a mad dash in his direction, but he passed into the dining-room, where they could not see him. They then whirled this way and that in the direction of every chicken in sight, but they, too, as suddenly disappeared from view. So there was nothing left for them to do but to run, neck and neck, for the old negro, as he was in the act of entering the barn.

He being old, and both striking him at once and unexpectedly, they knocked him down. They then walked all over him, tore his clothing, and licked his face and hands, again and again, till they were thoroughly cleansed for once.

The mother, hearing the commotion without, said: "Just look out there. What are those dogs doing?"

And, as the three stood peering out at the window, Nevin replied: "They are licking old Ben's face."

"And what in the world are they doing that for?" said the mother.

"Because, mother, they think that they are going somewhere, and that is their animal way of expressing their joy."

Then they all returned to the deserted table, laughing and in good spirits, for the evening meal.

"Mother, was any better bread than this ever placed

upon a table to appeal to the palates of hungry men? And this pie, and this steak!" And, without waiting for a reply, he continued: "If I ever get married, I say, if I ever do, I want my wife to thoroughly understand just how to prepare meals like this. I want no change whatever. I want neither additions nor subtractions. I want them all to be facsimiles of this very meal."

"Oh, son, you are too easily pleased when your mother directs the cooking. If some one else, even the wife whom you are so confident that you are going to have some time in the distant future, should prepare facsimile meals, as you call them, they would not please you so well. You know, as no one else does, exactly how to make allowances for me, because I am your mother and old. Besides, you think it altogether proper to encourage your old mother by flattering her just a little."

"Never you mind, mother; I mean it—every word of it." And, for the moment, he straightened up, and, as he looked upon her, she felt a blessing nothing short of the entire affection of one of the greatest and most capable of natures. Forever afterward, that affectionate look was a source of strength and comfort to her in whatever she might be engaged.

"Son," said the mother, as they continued their evening meal, "will you, or can you, explain to me why you are so utterly oblivious to praise? Any one but yourself would be so elated and top-heavy over such success as you had to-day, that he would talk about it all the time and would want others to do the same. Now, why not you?"

"Mother, I have made the problem of human life and our earthly existence a study all my life, and, first of all, I have learned that human nature, as such, is exceedingly weak, thoroughly incompetent, and hence,

never to be relied upon very long at a time. History for it, the people will sound the praises of men to-day and behead them to-morrow. For that reason, I decided long since, to never, knowingly, advocate or defend anything but that which is right—right in principle—right because it is right, and cannot, by any honest process of reasoning, be wrong.

"Hence, from the very nature of things, there is absolutely no room in my heart for anything that smacks of sham, hypocrisy, mockery or make-believe. That is why, mother, that I can have nothing to do with any of the churches of to-day. They all purport to be the teachers and exemplars of the straight and narrow way that leads from earth to heaven. They claim to be followers of one to whom they refer as the meek and lowly Nazarene.

"And yet, the competition for the position of mistress in the matter of hats and the various wearing apparel among the women, is not comparable to that existing among the congregations for the finest church building, finest pipe organ, finest choir and the most eloquent preacher. Then they resort to the meanest, lowest and most dishonest political trickery, in their mad efforts to obtain the high positions in their various societies. Besides, there is a loathsome competition among the evangelists as to who can report the largest number of additions. And in this, they are encouraged by the congregations who make their calls and compensations in keeping with the number of additions reported. I tell you the thing is wrong. It is wrong in principle. It is a sham and a fraud, for, by so doing, they profess one thing and do another.

"As for myself, what little time I am permitted to remain in this world, I shall place my time, my talents, my means, my life, and my all upon the altar

of sacrifice for the right. I shall relieve the sufferings of humanity to the extent of my ability.

"Then, again, I don't think that I deserve any special praise for availing myself of the most favorable environments with which I have always been surrounded. Neither do I think that any man deserves special mention for simply using the talents that he possesses by nature, any more than he should for possessing a strong and powerful muscular system.

"Last of all, I have determined not to bring my business home with me. I owe it to you, my aged parents, who have, by most strenuous lives, made so many and so great things possible for me. To me these successes are simply social privileges. Besides, this strong and powerful body of mine needs more exercise than it can get in the office and court-room. That is why I have my splendid gymnasium in such close proximity to my sleeping apartments, and that is why I became the athletic star in my college days."

During all this time, the mother ceased to eat at all, and the father was manifestly so absorbed, as well as pleased, that he only munched occasionally, while both their coffees became so cold that they had to replenish them from the steaming pot on the stove, after he was gone. And for some minutes, old Ben, having hitched Roanoke to the buggy and appeared in the driveway, stood in front of him, whip in hand, to keep the dogs off of him, and muttered to himself: "Marse Nev' mus' be hungry to-night; he sho' is."

Finishing his dinner, he kissed his mother good-bye, waved to the Governor, and, with the strong, lithe, quick movement, peculiar to himself, he was in the yard; a word to the dogs, Roanoke and Ben, and he was in the buggy and gone, with Ben, who had eaten his evening meal before hitching up, crouching humbly at his side.

"Mother," said the Governor, when all was quiet and they were seated once more in their comfortable chairs on the front porch of the elegant home, "do you know that that plain, unaffected talk that Nevin made at the table this evening contained more food for thought than any I ever heard? It was principle from beginning to end. It was the very heart, soul, life and spirit of all things essential. It was both a revelation and an inspiration to me for the reason that, while it was not clear, still I thought and felt that I could see a faint glimmering of the only thing that I have always lacked, couched in the principles to which he has pledged his great and promising life. And, while he may not see it himself, yet I believe that as he evolves the principles enunciated at the table to-night, this necessary something also will be made to stand out in the light so clearly that, old as I am, I may yet be able to see it and remove the only bitter dreg from my cup of happiness before I die."

CHAPTER III.

A MISSION OF MERCY.

Judge Gross (as the people now insisted on calling him, in honor of his ability and success, and in spite of the fact that he would not allow them to elect him to the judgeship, because his father had come to be universally known as Governor Gross) sat in his office early one morning, hastily glancing over his mail before removing his hat.

While thus absorbed, he realized, without looking up, the presence of some one, and when he did look up, Miss Emily Church stood before him modestly. She was large enough, perfect in form, beautifully

but not extravagantly gowned, her sensitive lips stood slightly apart as if in the attitude of speaking, thereby showing two rows of teeth as beautifully and as perfectly arranged as the choicest pearls by an artist, while it would seem that she wore the only hat that could have been selected that would blend so perfectly with the splendid mass of most delicately kept blonde hair, which lay in great waves as it parted from her intelligent brows. Then, to complete the picture, she had the most charming, great blue eyes that he had ever seen. To the Judge, she was a "dream."

When he laid his hat aside, and slowly lifted his giant form and stood at full height before her, and, at the same time, let the light of his countenance, through his great mellow gray eyes, rest upon her, for the moment she felt overwhelmed. She felt as if she had just received some most valuable present, or had had some very much desired blessing pronounced upon her.

As she looked into that strong but tenderest of faces, she felt that if she were at any time in imminent danger, or was being pursued by some deadly enemy, on that great breast and within those strong arms would be her most certain place of perfect safety. For, in her imagination, she could see those tender, loving eyes changed to points of burnished steel, at the approach of a deadly enemy.

And he could not help but feel her confidence in him, for there she stood, apparently as passive and as perfectly resigned as a wife in the presence of a loving husband, or a child in the presence of a devoted father.

And, as she looked upon him, she could not keep from thinking that if he were a husband, he would love his wife with all the affection of his nature; and, if he had children, they would always run to meet

him; that he would carry one, if not two, in his arms, and, when in the house, however many he might have, they would all want to get upon his lap, but some of them failing, would lean against him.

For a moment they stood, he looking down graciously upon her and she looking up confidently into his face. Then she broke the spell by saying: "Have I the honor of standing in the presence of Judge Gross?"

Then, with all the grace and dignity of which he was capable, he replied: "You have."

"Well, Your Honor, I have come on a mission of mercy. I have never had the pleasure of seeing you before that I can now recall, and I feel quite certain that if I ever had, I could recall it without difficulty."

At this stealthy acknowledgment of her favorable impression of him, at first sight, and the help that she might reasonably expect of him, he unconsciously leaned just a little farther forward, and, without any affectation whatever, he gave her one of those fear-dispelling, confidence-inspiring smiles so much appreciated by those who knew him, which, for a moment, almost caused her to forget her real mission, but, regaining herself, she continued:

"And I have always heard Judge Gross spoken of as a man of mercy and ready to help in every time of real need."

"If that is my reputation without, I am perfectly satisfied and abundantly rewarded for all of my efforts. For, if I know my own heart, my purpose is to solve the problem of human life and to relieve suffering humanity."

Just then a number of men appeared at the office door to see him on business; but, seeing the Judge showing this woman attentions that he had never

shown any other, after studying the situation for a few moments, turned, like the score or more who had preceded them, and walked away.

"Now, will you kindly tell me your mission this morning?" said the Judge.

"Mrs. Jenkins and family, at 1043 West Twenty-eighth Street, are in dire distress, *and they need you.*"

"And she requested you to come and tell me?"

"No, sir, she did not."

"Acquaintances then of long standing, I presume?"

"No, sir, I am not acquainted with the family at all."

"Members of the same church or lodge, perhaps?"

"We are not."

"Then you have been delegated by some committee, who do know them, to come and solicit my help."

"No, Your Honor; I am not sent by any committee."

"Then why have you come?"

"Judge Gross, knowing that you are the most busy man in all this city, if I myself could have rendered the necessary assistance, or if I could have thought of any one else upon whom I could have relied, I should never have troubled you, but her difficulty is deep and mysterious, and I fear that it is such as will tax the powers of your great mind."

"Please let me understand you; have you voluntarily come of your own accord? How can that be?"

"Why, Judge Gross, it is my business. It is my meat and my drink. It is the pleasure and happiness of my life. And, take such out of my life, and I would not want to live a day."

"Bless my soul, lady, do you know that you are the very embodiment, the personification of all of my study, of all my addresses, and of all my purposes in

life? And if the churches were consistently engaged in just such work, then they would stand forth as monumental powers for good and for good only. But, as it is, they *say* and do not, while you *do* and say not."

"By virtue of what you have just said, I take courage, and really feel that I can accomplish much more in the world. It was so kind in you to say so much, and I know, too, that it all came from your great sympathetic heart."

This last expression almost brought tears to the strong man's eyes. And, if there ever had been any hardness in his nature, it was all gone now. And he said, in as charming and sympathetic a tone as she had ever heard: "Your mission here this morning has not been in vain. I will call at once and do all that is in my power to relieve the family."

"It is so kind in you," she said.

And, looking steadily into his large, expressive eyes, while he looked with the same intense earnestness into hers, she put forth her beautiful, ungloved hand, and, in as sweet and appreciative a voice as he had ever heard, said:

"Good-bye, Judge Gross."

He seized her hand gently, then almost madly, yet softly pressed it, and, in spite of himself, affectionately, which neither could help but understand.

What a picture! The meeting of two kindred spirits! Spirits with the same object and aim in life! Spirits intended for companions and co-workers!

He reluctantly relinquished his hand grasp, as he said: "Good-bye."

And she was gone, but as she passed out at the door, she turned and gave him a parting glance, and, in his fevered imagination, he thought that he discovered a slight but affectionate smile. To save his

life, he could not refrain from going to the window and watching her just as far as he could see her.

"Was there ever a more beautiful form? Was there ever a more noble nature in the world?" he was saying to himself until she disappeared from sight. And the moment that he lost sight of her, he was distressed beyond measure.

"Was it a dream? Am I in a stupor? Where am I, anyway? She is my ideal. We talked a great deal together and expressed ourselves fully to each other and found that we are of the same mind, heart, soul and spirit; yet, I have no idea who she is. I never asked her her name. I might find out at the Jenkins's who she is, but she said they are not acquainted. What will I do—what can I do? I have never heard of a similar instance. If the Jenkins trouble is any more mysterious than this, then it is highly problematical whether I shall be able to solve it. If possible, however, I must, in some way, ascertain who she is."

At the same time, her mind also was not inactive. She, too, was saying to herself: "I just can't understand it! If any one had told me that I could have appeared in the presence of that wonderful man and felt as much at ease as I did, I could not have believed it. He certainly is the grandest specimen of the race that I have ever seen. But there was something about him that completely dispelled all embarrassment.

"Then he expressed himself to me, not only kindly, but affectionately. I wonder if he expresses himself that way to others? I do hope not. Oh, but if he were only a Christian, he would be my ideal. But what troubles me more than anything else is, that it is the failure of church members to live up to what they profess, that has kept him from investigating the claims of Christianity. I cannot help but believe that the intelligent preaching of Brother Guide, our minis-

ter, and the work of our congregation will appeal to his honest heart and intelligent mind, if we can ever prevail upon him to come under their influence."

CHAPTER IV.

THE IDEAL CONGREGATION.

Many years ago, Elder Guide appeared in the city of Bidwell, as a minister of the Gospel of Christ.

He said, in his first discourse: "I am determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified. I shall speak where the Bible speaks, and keep silent where the Bible is silent."

These were his announcements at his first meeting, which he held in an old store building on Bond Street.

"Oh, yes," said Brice Malone, the champion infidel of that rather out-of-the-way part of the city, "I have heard that before. In fact, that is what they all say, but I have never seen one of them live up to his promise, yet. And all I have to say is, that if all of the churches would live up to what they profess, there would not be nearly so many infidels in the world as there are. I know that I, for one, would not be, for I must say that what they profess, in my judgment, is one of the grandest things on this earth."

This he said after Elder Guide had closed his meeting for the evening. But, to his utter astonishment, in response to his statement, the preacher replied:

"What you have said is all true—every word of it. And I deplore the present condition of things as much as you possibly can. And I am determined, to the extent of my ability, and to the extent of the greatest possible influence that I may be able to exert, through

the teaching of the Scriptures, to bring about the condition of things that you suggest. Of course, not simply because you suggest it, but because the Bible teaches it."

This was not what Brice expected. He expected him to do what most all other ministers had done; that is, fly at him angrily and abuse the infidels by saying that they were all dishonest. Elder Guide, by his wise course, gained an important victory for the cause of Christ right there at the beginning of his work. For not only would Malone himself come back to hear him, but he would bring others with him. Besides, his good words about the minister and the position that he occupied, would largely disarm them and relieve their minds of whatever prejudice they might have against him and his teaching, before they came.

It was not many years until the truth had prevailed to such an extent that Brice Malone and others who had obeyed the gospel, together with Elder Guide, were enabled to erect just such a meeting house as they wanted and just where they wanted it.

The location was selected and the building planned with one single object in view; that is, to lead men, women, and responsible children to Christ and salvation, and thereby honor, glorify and magnify the name of their God.

When the building was completed, all who passed by would say, "How sensible." For it was just such a building as would neither provoke criticism because too expensive, nor would it provoke remarks because not sufficiently expensive.

When Elder Guide announced his theme for his first discourse in the new building, how perfectly in keeping it was with all of his teachings and life thus far. It was, "The Ideal Congregation."

He took as his Scripture references: Luke 24:49.

"And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

Acts 1:8. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Acts 1:14. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

Acts 2:41. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Acts 2:42. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer."

In his discourse, he emphasized the following points:

1. The fact that the disciples were together, and not only together, but together *in one place.*

"I have known," said he, "congregations of professed worshippers to actually disband, not because the members were the most wicked on earth, not because they had finally concluded to give up their Christianity entirely, not because they had finally concluded that the whole thing was a farce and a mockery, but apparently for no other reason than that they could not prevail upon the members to attend the public services, or who would not come together."

2. They were of *one accord* in one place.

"Members should a thousand times better remain apart rather than come together to wrangle, quarrel and contend with each other," he said.

3. He called special attention to the fact that all the early Christians, instead of wrangling, spent the time in prayer.

4. He mentioned as a very important point, that they were there, not simply because they were commanded to be there, but because they were *waiting for the fulfillment of the Father's promise that He would send them the Holy Spirit.*

He then called attention to the natural and legitimate results of such a meeting.

1. He said that they received the fulfillment of the promise, which he insisted they would not have done, had they not been together in the right place, in the proper state of mind, spending the time in the right way, and looking in faith for the fulfillment of the promise.

2. By virtue of the power which they received, through the fulfillment of that promise, they not only knew what to preach, but were enabled to preach it in all of the languages and dialects of earth. For Jews and devout men out of every nation under heaven, were present on that occasion, and all heard the gospel in their respective tongues, wherein they were born.

3. Because of their ability to preach, through the fulfillment of this promise, about three thousand souls were converted to Christ in one day.

4. The brethren were so strengthened that they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers.

"Now," said Elder Guide, "we have the promise of that which is just as necessary for us to-day as was the baptism of the Holy Spirit to them at that time, and we will receive the fulfillment of the promise made to us upon no other conditions than that we come together, with one accord, in one place, spend our time in prayer, and look in faith for the promised blessings.

"Besides, as the result of such meetings and such

preparation, we will know the truth, how to preach it, souls will be converted and the brethren strengthened.

"We differ mentally and morally as much as we do physically, in many instances; hence, we should not expect the same degree of efficiency and moral worth in all. And just as the well members of the physical body, presided over by the head, will do all that they can to restore the afflicted member to health, so when the members of the body of Christ of the Church become afflicted with sin, it is the duty of all the other members, presided over by Christ, the great head of the Church, to do all that they can to save the members that are overtaken in faults. And just as a physical member should never be amputated until its remaining a member of the body will endanger the life of the entire body, so a member of the church should never be cut off, unless his remaining will endanger the life, power and influence of the entire congregation."

It is not worth while to outline another discourse, for all that followed were in perfect harmony with the above. And while Elder Guide is growing white in his work, the congregation, as such, has never swerved from the spirit of this first discourse. As a result, all who come under its influence are favorably impressed. They go away saying, "Why, if all church people were like these, there would be no occasion for criticism. And it would be next to impossible to keep people out of the church."

CHAPTER V.

THE STORY RELATED.

"Mission of mercy," and "They need you!" rang in Judge Gross' mind all that day, to the extent that, at times, in spite of all that he could do, he would appear absent-minded. And, when alone, he could close his eyes and see the beautiful young lady who had come on the mission of mercy, standing before him as distinctly in all her outlines as she had that day. He could see her every feature, the expression of her eyes, and hear the very intonation of her words.

"What does all this mean?" he would say to himself, as he walked to and fro across the room. "No one ever made such an impression upon me before. Then, to think that I took the time of my clients to reveal all my plans and purposes in life to a stranger, and a woman, at that.

"True, she told me her plans, too, but it was because I catechised her in order that I might the better understand why she was on her errand of mercy. But I had told her my purposes in my life before this, and without her asking.

"Am I beside myself? My mind is all in a whirl! Well, why not be honest with one's self as with others? It makes no difference who I am, what I have done, what I will do, or what the people will think about it. To be honest with myself, I must confess that I saw in that beautiful woman the completion of my life's happiness. But, who is she, and where does she reside? Who knows? I must, by some means, find out, for I have not the heart to work much longer without her."

On his way home that evening he was somewhat

passive, absent-minded in his recognition of those who bowed so cordially to him. The shadows were rapidly lengthening on one side of the street, while on the other side the sun's rays were increasing in power, because becoming more direct. He felt inclined to walk in the shadow, as more in keeping with the perplexities of his own heart.

Passing the veranda, he waved his hand and said: "Father," and receiving the familiar response, "Son." He then walked to the rear and called to Ben.

"Here I is, Marse Nevin," said Ben.

As he stood with both hands lifted high above his head, to keep Dan and Joe from taking running shoots and jumping high enough to lick them, he managed to call loud enough, in spite of their loud barking, to make old Ben hear him say:

"I want you to drive me away out on West Twenty-eighth Street, after dinner."

"Sho', Marse Nevin, yo' hoss will be here waitin' fo' yo' all."

Entering the rear door, his mother met him and he placed his arms around her and kissed her forehead. While he was making preparations for dinner, the mother went to the veranda and said:

"Father, you notice Nevin at the dinner table, and see if you don't think that there is something troubling him."

Of course, the Governor took it for granted that it was simply the mother-love that was ever alive to all the wants, whims and foibles, real or imaginary, of an only son. But, upon entering the dining-room, the Governor's keen, observant eye saw that the mother was right, and as quickly inquired:

"Son, what is it that troubles you?"

"There is a family on West Twenty-eighth Street

in deep distress, the nature of which I will not know until I go to see them after dinner."

"But, son, is there not something back of all that? For your business acquaints you with trouble all the time, and, really, I never knew it to make such an impression upon you before," said the Governor.

Then, with the frankness of an only son, who had never known what it was to keep anything from his parents, he said:

"No, it is not the family's trouble that weighs upon my mind, but the way in which I learned of their trouble, or, rather, the messenger that brought me the information."

"Who is the messenger?" inquired the Governor.

"Ah, father, that is exactly what troubles me. I don't know who she is, and I am afraid I shall never find out."

"But, son, why should that make any difference?"

He sat for a while as if to let the whole scene pass vividly before his mind, and then exclaimed:

"But, father, if you could only have seen her, as she stood before me, the impersonation of beauty and sweetness, and heard her say in a most charming voice, 'I am on a mission of mercy—the family at 1043 West Twenty-eighth Street needs you.' I was so absorbed in her and her errand, that I let her go without learning her name, and that is what troubles me."

The parents did not feel to treat the matter lightly, for they knew that their son never dealt with anything in that way; that he never surfaced anything; that he never spent a moment dealing with anything but realities.

On his way, once in the outskirts of the city, he could hear the chickens cawing, talking and quarrelling within their roosts, in their endeavor to settle

down for the night. The boys were bringing their cows in from the nearby pasture fields. The shadows were deepening as they increased in length. The sun, in the west, was collecting its last rays of light preparatory to retiring for the night. And the moon, in the east, was so pale that one could scarcely see her face.

"How perfectly all these things blend with the deep and mysterious trouble of the people yonder, the apparently blind, stumbling effort that I am about to make to relieve them, and the utter darkness in which I grope my way in my effort to find out the name of that beautiful angel of mercy, who came to me of her own accord, without compensation, or, even knowing the people in trouble.

" 'Then, Your Honor, you will help them,' I can hear her say. Help them, most certainly I will, if every case on the docket has to be postponed, or tried by others. Even if there is not one dollar or one particle of glory in it, I appreciate it infinitely more, under the circumstances, than I would a national or an international case that would bring me thousands of dollars, and place my name upon the pen of every editor, and on the tongue of every reading person in the civilized world."

Old Ben, crouching at his side, noticed that his master was very much absorbed in thought, if not in a positive stupor. But he said nothing.

"Now, Mrs. Jenkins," said he, after having introduced himself and explained to her just why he was there, and how it had all come about. "If I am to help you, I want to know all the facts in the case, as nearly as you can possibly relate them."

"Judge Gross, you can see yourself that we are exceedingly poor. No family is poorer than we. So that we can promise you absolutely nothing."

"That is a matter of utmost indifference," said he, with apparent impatience.

"Well, my husband is one of the best men whom I ever saw. In this, I feel quite certain that all who know him will bear me out. He heard, some time ago, where he could get some good land on time and on such terms as would enable him to pay for it. And, feeling that he would necessarily have to do something of the kind in order to provide for his large and rapidly increasing family, he went to investigate it.

"But, on his return, he had to pass through the Boncreft community, where there have been so many holdups and robberies lately. And, having but a little expense money, he did not want to be robbed. So, when he started, he put a pistol in his pocket for his own protection. He emptied one chamber when he killed a rabbit for his supper, one evening. The next morning, soon after he started on his journey (he was on his way home then), he met a terribly frightened horse, with a bridle and saddle, running at top speed.

"Husband, supposing that the horse had thrown his rider, and possibly crippled, or killed him, being of a tender and sympathetic nature, hurried along to see if he could render him any assistance. He had not gone more than a half mile, when he saw the man lying in the brush by the side of the road, with a bullet-hole above his right eye, and a knife still sticking directly in his heart, with the warm blood running, and the man yet moving.

"Husband went to remove the knife, but just as he placed his hand on it, he heard the clicks of guns and the loud curses of men, swearing that they needed no law to reach his case, for they had caught him in the very act. They knocked him and cuffed him around for some time, and when they took his pistol

away from him, and saw that there was one chamber empty, they were determined to kill him on the spot.

"But they finally decided that it would be mean for so few of them to have all of the fun to themselves, as they said that they wanted as many as possible to witness the killing of so cold-blooded a murderer.

"He told them that all he wanted was time to prove his innocence. But that so exasperated them, that from their words and actions, he had every reason to believe that his time had fully come. But, for some reason, they still spared his life.

"Now, those men heard the shot and heard the running of the horse, and they themselves hastened to the scene for exactly the same purpose that my husband did. But, oh, my poor husband unfortunately appeared upon the scene first, and took hold of the knife at that, the most unfortunate of all moments.

"And, Judge Gross, those men honestly think that my husband committed the deed, and I don't see how they could believe otherwise. If they had appeared first, in all probability, they would have done the very thing that he was about to do, but they would have had witnesses to their removing the knife, whereas my husband had none who saw the man's condition before he laid his hand upon the knife. Knowing my husband as I do and have for so long, I know that there is not a man on this earth more incapable of committing such a heinous crime."

She then burst into a flood of tears, and said:

"But now they have tried, convicted and sentenced my dear, good, innocent husband to hang, and he is now lying there in the jail, helplessly and hopelessly awaiting the day of execution. How can we ever stand it? The children always loved him so dearly. And now, every night before we retire, we get together and weep and mourn and cry aloud un-

til, through sheer exhaustion, we are compelled to retire for the night, and then we all cry ourselves to sleep.

"Oh, my friend, there appears to us to be nothing but midnight darkness and blackness forever. I don't know who told you to come. I don't know why you should come, for I cannot see any chance on earth to save him, for the evidence is all against him. The only evidence that I have that he is not guilty is that of my own bleeding heart, and that will not be admitted, much less credited, in court. Oh, we are ruined, we are ruined, we are ruined!"

With this last outburst of grief, she swooned away and remained in that condition for a long time. All that they could get out of her was, "Oh, my poor husband, my poor husband!"

During all this time the Judge sat absorbed in thought, apparently oblivious to everything that was transpiring, even of the presence and weeping of the family.

When she had fully recovered from her paroxysm of grief, he, as if arousing out of a stupor, said in his deep, rich, but kind and sympathetic voice:

"May I see Mrs. Jenkins alone?"

As he said this, he lifted his powerful form in their midst, and, while all was kindness, still they recognized authority and determination in his very posture and tone of voice. They recognized him as a friend—one who had not come for their money, but had come, if possible, to do them good. Also they were impressed with the fact that if there was any one who could do anything for them, he *could,* and further, if there was anything that could be done, he *would.* When all were out except the mother, he said:

"Mrs. Jenkins, your long and, indeed, pitiful story

has explained some things to me that have been a profound puzzle hitherto. For the present, suffice it to say that your husband is not guilty, will not hang, and the guilty will be apprehended."

She sprang at him to throw her arms about his neck, and was about to shout for joy, but with uplifted hand he said calmly:

"Make no demonstration and, whatever you do, keep what I have said to you absolutely to yourselves, otherwise we may fail of results. Now, only one question, do you have any idea who the young lady is who reported your case to me?"

"I do not, but if you desire I will do all that I can to find out," supposing, of course, that he wanted her testimony in the case.

"By so doing you will show me a great kindness," said he.

Then he hurried out and found faithful Ben waiting patiently for him. Having heard the case and seen the solution, but especially having had the promise of assistance in ascertaining the identity of the beautiful messenger, he was greatly lightened in heart. He even apologized to old Ben for having kept him waiting so long, talked to Roanoke on his way home, observed the beauty of the moon, patted the horse and dogs when they got home, and bade old Ben good-night.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ACCIDENT.

When the congregation to which Elder Guide ministered came to organize years ago, after having studied closely the Scriptural qualifications of elders and

deacons, that they should be full of the Holy Spirit, apt to teach, husbands of one wife, of good report and successful in rearing their own children—all, to a member, said:

"For elders, Brothers Guide, Graves and Guard; for deacons, Brothers Workman, Helper, Wright and Hand."

These men were selected because of their special and peculiar Scriptural qualifications and the elders' special aptness to teach. When the minister was away conducting evangelistic meetings in destitute parts of the city, it was no task but a genuine pleasure for the congregation to sit and listen to the beautiful unfoldings of the Scriptures by the elders. They all believed, taught and practised that the Christian people are the "salt of the earth," that Christ came to seek and to save the lost, and that to be Christ-like they, too, would have to do the same thing.

That they would have to visit the sick and afflicted, the widows and orphans—administering to their wants, if they would have pure and undefiled religion before God the Father.

About 10 A.M. one day the governor saw the ambulance dash past his residence at an unusually terrific rate, and in a very short time return with a young man who had been struck by a runaway team and thrown for quite a distance, giving him a severe strain and wound in the knee.

They took him to the Receiving Hospital, had the knee dressed, and then sent him to his own room, in another part of the city, where he and a young friend, both from the East recently, were "baching."

When they had lifted him from the stretcher, laid him on his bed and were about to leave, a nicely dressed, smooth-shaven gentleman, with iron gray hair and a strikingly kind face, said:

"Go right along; I'll remain until his friend comes."

The young man was in agony all day. He appeared almost delirious at times. The gentleman gave him water, fanned him and helped him when he tried to move. By and by the other young man came, not knowing what had happened. When he entered the room, he was astonished beyond measure to find his friend in bed.

"Why, Bill, what in thunder is the matter?" he asked.

The injured man looked at the stranger, as if he desired that he should state the case. This he did in a kind, modulated tone.

"A runaway team," said he, "struck him at ten o'clock this forenoon and gave him a very severe wound in the knee. I was at the Receiving Hospital and saw them dress it, and have been with him all day. And now, if you will kindly excuse me for a few minutes, I have a very soft pillow that I used when I was suffering with rheumatism, and I am certain that it will be the very thing for him to rest his knee upon. I will go and get it."

He was gone but a very short time, when he returned with a pillow that looked for all the world as if it had been made for the purpose. The young man seemed to rest easier from the time that his limb was placed upon it.

"Now," said the stranger to the young man's roommate, "to wait on him while he is suffering so much is all that you can do. You will have no time to prepare anything for both to eat. So I will send your dinners to you."

"Oh, but you are under no obligations to do that," said the young man.

"Oh, yes, I am, and that is exactly the way that

I would want you to do by me if our conditions were reversed."

As they were eating the meal that had been brought them at the proper time by a bright, intelligent, business-looking young man, the well man remarked to the sick one, whose pain, for the time being, had almost entirely left him: "If they had asked me to have written out our orders for just what we wanted for this meal, they could not have suited us any better."

"That is just what I was thinking myself," said the sick man.

The next morning, as he was preparing the table, in came the same young man with a most enticing breakfast.

"Look here, I insist upon it that you should not do so much for us. For we are nothing but strangers to you, and you don't know but what we are outlaws and have drifted in here from—nobody knows where, as fugitives from justice."

"That is true. We do not know who you are. It is also true that you need help now because of this unavoidable accident. Your friend has not only to suffer pain, but the loss of time, and may meet a doctor's bill. And you have to lose your time to wait upon him. That is not all. I am certain that, failing to do just what we are now doing for you and propose to do until you are both able to work, is what makes outlaws in many instances."

"Do you know," said the sick man, not suffering much at this time, "that is the reason given by most every man for his outlawry? But this is the first time that I ever heard it given by the other side. You are certainly right, my friend."

When he was gone, Jones, the well man, said: "Well, I'll be blowed! Davis, who the dickens are

these people anyway? Do you know that a few acts of kindness like all this would fill me so full of pious sentiment that I'll be dog-goned if I don't believe that I would quit swearing?"

"Jones, I know that if there were more such acts, the world would be a great deal better off," said Davis.

Later in the day Davis' knee was in such a rack of pain that he was almost delirious again. Just at this time a rap was heard. Jones opened the door, and a very imposing-looking personage stepped in. He wore a long-tailed coat, buttoned in front, bore a silk hat on his left arm, and held a gold-headed cane in his right hand. His mustache was waxed and twisted back against his nose. His hair was parted so exactly in the center that a blind louse would have had no difficulty whatever in following the broad white road leading over the top of his head.

"My name is Dr. Fop, pastor of the ——— Church. I heard of your affliction, and I thought that I would drop in and see you. Would you like to have me pray with you before I go, as I have not long to remain, and have a number of calls to make this afternoon?"

"Let me speak to you," said Jones, beckoning to him and starting toward the door. When they were out in the hallway, he said, "He is suffering greatly, and I don't think that he needs prayer just now so much as he needs relief from his pain."

"All right, just as you say, sir! Good-day!"

He thundered down the steps and walked rapidly away, feeling that his dignity had received quite an affront. When Jones returned to the room, the other man was too delirious to share his scorn, but the storm raged in his own breast just the same.

"The damned old hypocrite! Come into a sick room all togged up after that fashion, and swelling fit to burst with egotism! Wanted to pray! Hugh,

the Devil himself could offer just as acceptable prayers as that man. Call that Christianity? A thousand times, no! If the Devil don't get such men, I don't see any use in having a devil."

An hour or two later, while Davis was still in such agony that it seemed to Jones that the sick man would have to scream, a sharp rap was heard again at the door. It sounded as if it were not answered quickly the person would be gone, and they would not see who it was. When he did open the door, a little woman stood there so nervous and restless that she was actually walking around—could not stand still.

"We heard that there is a very sick man here, and the flower committee of our church appointed me to bring you this bouquet." Then, leaning forward with all the style and stiffness imaginable, she offered him the nosegay.

"You tell your damned committee to take their flowers and go to hell! It is not flowers that we need just now."

She was so shocked that she almost dropped in her place, tears came to her eyes, and she hurried away, wondering in her heart if they were the most wicked men on earth, or if their committee had made a mistake.

Soon thereafter the neatly dressed old gentleman, in company with another man, who was large, and had an intelligent, determined, but kindly face, touched the door lightly, because they had heard of the change in the young man's condition. And when the door was opened, they entered softly and, seeing at a glance that he was much worse than they had anticipated, without saying a word, proceeded with the skill and deftness of physicians to alleviate his sufferings by loosening the bandages and applying

exactly the proper remedies. In a surprisingly short time his pain was gone, and the man, who had not had a minute's rest during the entire night, soon fell asleep.

One day when Davis was entirely out of danger, and not suffering at all, some one rapped on the door gently, and before Jones could get to the door they heard, as they thought then and said later, the sweetest voice that ever greeted their ears, saying, "May I come in?"

And, as if in a mad dash for the same goal, they both said at exactly the same instant, "Come in."

A moment later as charming a specimen of the race as it had ever been their privilege to look upon stood before them with something delicately napkined in her right hand and a bouquet of most beautiful carnations in the other. And, in the same sweet voice that they had heard outside the door, she said:

"We were very fortunate in our baking to-day, and, as we learned that you are very rapidly convalescing, we thought that you would both enjoy a nice cake."

She then removed the napkin, which was as clean and white as snow, and placed a most appetizing angel-food cake on the table and, at the same time, without mentioning it, laid the bouquet by the side of it. As she did this, she said:

"I do hope that you will both enjoy the cake. Good-by," and she was gone.

They were both so overcome by the charm of the young lady and the beautiful gifts she had presented that in their anxiety to express their hearty appreciation of what she had done, they both muttered and blundered out something at the same time, and in such a way as to be utterly unintelligible, and so wholly out of keeping with the artistic, yet unstudied way in which she had performed her part that they

both blushed for days after every time they would think about it.

As she passed out at the door, Jones said:

"Davis, this is the limit! It is the climax of kindness! And just to think of it, by people, too, who have never even asked us our names and have never volunteered their own. I am going to find out, if I can, who they are."

He rushed out and down the steps as she was disappearing in the distance.

"Say, partner," said he to a strange man who was passing by, "who is that young lady you met, passing now around the corner yonder?"

"Why, that is Miss Emily Church. I thought everybody knew her. Anyway, I know that all the sick, the poor, the needy and the troubled know her," said he.

"And can you tell me who the neatly dressed, gray-haired old gentleman is that has been coming to us ever since my partner got hurt?"

"I haven't noticed him coming to see you, but from the description and the work in which he is engaged you can have reference to no other than Elder Guide, minister at the large, comfortable-looking church at the corner of Eighth and Hill streets. Miss Church is a member of that congregation. The minister, elders, deacons, men, women and the entire congregation are engaged in that kind of work most all of the time."

"But Miss Church, being a lady of large means, and not having to support herself, can and does devote more of her time to this kind of work than the others. In fact, she devotes most all of her time to her church work. I am not a Christian myself, and I belong to no church, but if I ever should become a Christian right there is where I would go."

When Jones went back upstairs, he said: "Say,

Davis, hereafter you and I will have to modify our swearing, at least, to decent slang—except when we run afoul of these hypocritical preachers and church members. God may not condemn us for swearing at them a little, for the provocation is great, and no one knows this any better than God himself."

"Why so?" said Davis.

"Because I have learned all about it. Do you know who that kindly old gentleman is who remained with you the first day?"

"I do not. I have often wondered, and I have thought several times that I would ask him his name. Who is he?"

"Well, sir, he is the minister at that large church at Eighth and Hill streets. That gentleman who came with him is one of the elders, and that dream of a young lady is one of his members. She, being a lady of large means, devotes most all of her time to relieving the sufferings of humanity. And the entire church devotes as much time to this kind of work as they possibly can."

"Christianity, then, the genuine article, the pure and unadulterated kind that does not let its left hand know what its right hand does, is at the bottom of this whole thing. So just as soon as you are able to creep right there we are going, although it has been so long since we were in a church house we may not know how to act."

"Jones, that is exactly what we will do. Of course, they will recognize us, and we will join them in their efforts to relieve others, who happen to be unfortunate in the world."

"That is what we will do," heartily responded Jones. "We will not wait for some one to come and call upon us, beg us and plead with us to help them, but we will do just like these people do. We will

always be on the alert. We will go out and search diligently till we find, at least, some of the many people in this city who stand in so much need of just the kind of assistance that they have been giving us."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECOND MEETING.

"Mac" Hadden, a saloon-keeper who had accumulated quite a large amount of property, had been afflicted for years with what the doctors who he had consulted—and he had consulted many—called an incurable disease. But until recently he had hoped that he would get well.

"If I had been an excessive drinker like some men I have known," he said, "then it might be as the doctors tell me. But while I have always drunk some, I have never drunk enough at any time to give disease of any kind any additional power over me."

But now he has changed his mind. He sees things just as they are. He now not only thinks, but he knows that the time of his departure is at hand. Virtually feeling the jaws of death beginning to close upon him, he says:

"Oh, if I only had my life to live over, I would not engage in the saloon business! I would live an entirely different life! But what has been done has been done, and I have not the time to undo it, and perhaps could not if I did have the time."

"The only thing left for me to do at this late hour is to make provision for the distribution of my property. And while I know that there are many competent men in this city, and I would not, for the world, disparage any of them, still I must say that

in my judgment the most unerringly certain man whom I have ever met is Judge Nevin Gross. And it is he whom I desire to write my will for me."

Miss Emily Church had been a frequent caller at this home since the time came when all could plainly see that the hour of dissolution was approaching fast for the head of this household, and hence the shadows of gloom and sorrow lengthened, moment by moment.

The fact that Mr. Hadden was what the world would call a wicked man and an unbeliever and engaged in a business of which Miss Church would most heartily disapprove, and the fact that his family was not at all religiously inclined, did not affect her in the least, when it came to the hour of affliction and sorrow.

She came to comfort and console them exactly the same as if they had been active members of her own congregation. When asked how she could do it, she would always respond by asking:

"How can I not do it, and still pose as a Christian and a follower of the meek and lowly Nazarene? In his day, he saw the necessity of this lesson, which he taught and emphasized in the most impressive way by asking, 'For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?' Again, 'And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?'"

"Now, I think that to confine our sympathies and charities and help to those only of our immediate membership, would be as anti-Christian as anything could well be. It would contradict both the letter and the spirit of Christ's holy law, as well as the example he gave us. And it would place the professed followers of Christ on a dead level with the heathen

and the publicans, for they both do exactly the same things.

"This is what our entire congregation stands for. While Brother Guide never went into Mr. Hadden's place of business, because he did not believe in it (and told him so frequently), yet he came to see him, perhaps, as often as he did any of his members. Our elders also did the same thing and the members, as well. As a result, he has always taken pleasure in saying that he thought more of Elder Guide than any living man. He also insisted upon it that if the Bible be true, then the Eighth and Hill congregation is right."

But, in spite of the fact that she was prompted by religious motives in all that she did, and was standing at this moment in the shadow of grief, her heart fairly leaped for joy when she overheard Mr. Hadden mention the name of Judge Gross. It grieved her to the heart that it was necessary to call anyone for the purpose for which he was about to be called. But if anyone had to be called, she rejoiced that it was to be the Judge, because she heartily agreed with Mr. Hadden with reference to his competency. Then, at the thought of seeing him once more, the privilege of looking into his eyes and hearing his voice again, tended to lift her above the shadow and the gloom into which she had voluntarily entered through sympathy for others.

In due time, the Judge appeared, together with the notary public and those who were to be witnesses to the will. And as they entered the sick room, or, I may say, the death chamber, Judge Gross towering a full head above the others, approached the sick man—the personification of sympathy and anxious concern, which was greatly emphasized by his rich, deep and sympathetic voice.

The scene affected Mrs. Hadden and Miss Church differently. While the wife was accustomed to grief —for she had many indisputable warnings that the end was approaching—still, her sorrow had not been quite so keen and crushing as it was at this time. It seemed that the presence of men to help him arrange his business in such a legal form as to enable him to leave it, not for a day, for a week, month, or even a year, but *forever,* emphasized the certainty and nearness of his departure, and deepened her sorrow. Hence the sight of them threw her into paroxysms of grief. So that, she could not, by any force of her character, or will power, refrain from sending up one shriek after another.

Not so with Miss Church. True, she was just as capable of grief as was Mrs. Hadden, but not being immediately connected with the sick by family ties, Miss Church would necessarily feel the grief much less keenly than the wife.

Miss Church knowing that the end would come no sooner because of the presence of the men, could not let her mind rest upon the fact that what they were doing would save the wife a great deal of trouble and anxiety, after he was gone, and the first out-burst of grief had passed. Her mind thus divided, the young lady devoted more of the time to recognizing those present.

While the Judge was arranging everything to the minutest detail, with that delicate precision, characteristic of those only who are authority upon all matters pertaining to jurisprudence, the wife could be heard in her apartments shrieking and bemoaning her approaching loss.

But beneath the loud crying, the Judge heard the unmistakable voice that first put him under a spell that, to him, scarcely seemed earthly. He was

thrilled again as it uttered such sweet and sympathetic words as to sooth the distressed into perfect quiet at times.

The sound of her voice, the prospect of seeing her and learning the name and address of one whom he feared that he had lost forever, had no tendency to unnerve him, but just the opposite. It seemed to nerve and encourage him for his task.

The work being done, they all went out and all departed for their respective places of business, except the Judge himself. He deliberately walked to the weeping woman, took her by the hand and while his strong manly form trembled, he literally wept with her and spoke to her words fraught with the deepest meaning and the warmest sympathy ever poured into the sorrowing heart of a man or woman.

As soon as he released her hand, she, apparently overcome by such unheard-of sympathy from such a man, fairly fled into another room, closing the door after her.

He then turned to her, whose presence he felt and whom he knew would remain until he had fully expressed his condolence to the heart-broken woman. As he took her not too small but delicate and well rounded hand in his, looking into the same rich expressive blue eyes that he had once before and that he had feared for several days he never would again he said softly:

"I was so afraid that I might never see you again. But I knew that if I ever should, it would be on some mission of mercy, for you told me so—and I believed you. That is your mission here to-night."

"And I wanted so much to see you again, too. And I fully believed that if I should ever meet you personally again, you would be engaged in doing some

kindly act. I appreciate so much your saying that you believed me."

"I would not have you do otherwise than appreciate it for all this world. For, from the time that my eyes first fell upon you, I was powerless to resist you in any way. You will well remember that I told you all of my plans and purposes in life—a thing that I seldom ever tell even my most intimate acquaintances. But I seem to have made an exception of you and told you all, the very first time that I ever met you.

"I was so completely absorbed in you that I let you go away without even learning your name and address, which fact has disturbed me more than any oversight that I ever made."

"I am so sorry that I ever caused you a moment's pain," she said.

"Then may I see you again?" he asked.

She seeing the great man that he was, so solicitous, so helpless and so dependent upon her for relief, her reply was worthy of such a question by such a man. She said:

"It would break my heart to know that this is to be the last time."

Upon hearing her sweet reply, nothing but discretion, possessed by truly great men only, prevented him from taking her into his arms, pressing her to his heart and kissing her sweet lips, again and again and again.

However, he did venture to say, "I doubt seriously whether there is another like you on the face of this earth. You stand alone in the moral realm, so far as my observation extends, and the ambition of my life is simply to emulate you as best I can. And oh, please do not leave me this time without giving me your name and address."

"My name is Emily Church and I reside at 950 Sunset Boulevard."

"The diamond among all my treasures!" he said.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

Jenkins was still in jail awaiting the day of his execution. But he was greatly relieved when he heard that his case was not only in the hand of Judge Gross, but that the Judge had told his wife that he would clear him. That he was not the guilty one and that his confinement, instead of being a curse to any one, would be a blessing to the community. For it would enable them to solve another and deeper mystery in the city and apprehend the guilty parties.

When the proper day, hour and moment came, four of the most experienced and daring officers in all the city stepped, by pairs, into two great stores in different parts of the city, walked straight to the proprietors, who received them with all of the suavity of experienced and successful business men.

But, as one officer in each case began to read warrants to them, charging them with the killing of the man, for which Jenkins was about to be hanged, they both made desperate dashes for their heavily magazined Winchesters, which they always kept in close proximity and within easy reach of the chairs that they occupied almost incessantly from the time they entered the stores till they left them.

One, through sheer necessity of saving their own lives, the officers were compelled to shoot dead on the spot—in his own place of business and in the presence of his clerks! The other surrendered after a

desperate struggle in which all were frightfully bruised, counters turned over, dry good thrown on the floor and queensware broken.

A crashing thunderbolt from a clear sky, or a mighty earthquake, could not have shocked Bidwell more than this arrest and tragedy. Business was almost entirely suspended for a time, so great was the excitement. The city was in uproar. The clerks of the two stores stood aghast and paralyzed. They had thought that they were working for the very best men in Bidwell—they were always kind to them and paid the best wages.

But, perhaps, the most distressed and excited man in the city was Dr. Fop, pastor of the ——— Church. When he heard of it, he was beside himself and rushed with madness to the scene. He came without his coat, had even forgotten his silk hat and gold-headed cane. And his hair (that was always parted with such precision and so exactly in the middle that some had supposed that if the hairs had been counted, the number on either side would have been the same) at this particular time was disheveled and not parted at all.

"Oh, my dear, good Brother Penwell," he wailed, "the best man whom I have ever had the privilege of meeting, the best church worker and one who offered the most fervent and the most earnest prayers I ever heard. Then to think that he had to be shot down like a dog, for a heinous crime that he knew no more about than I did! It is just too bad! Those miserable officers ought to be lynched!"

Similar scenes and remarks were going on about the other man. For he, too, had been a great worker in another church. But there was no likelihood of any lynching being done. For, as Judge Gross did everything thoroughly, he made no exception in this

case. All things had been so systematically arranged that they were ready to thwart any attempt at an uprising.

John Kamper, the prisoner who had escaped death, stormed and raved, saying, "It is an outrage and the most diabolical trick that I have ever known. If they had charged us with some small crime, then they might have made some people believe it. But to charge us with the premeditated, wilful, deliberate and cold-blooded murder for money is simply ridiculous. Just think of it. It is absolutely too absurd to talk about, or even think about. Guilty? A thousand times, no!

"All the people in this town know that we are not guilty. Those miserable, grovelling sneaks of officers only wanted to make a reputation for themselves; and the sneaking lawyer, who is at the bottom of this whole thing, only wanted to renew the gold and silver linings of his own pockets. I know who he is and I see through this whole thing clearly, now."

"Are you sure of your ground, son?" said the Governor to Nevin as they were driving together one evening.

"Father," said the son, turning and looking him square in the eye and with that about him that bespeaks absolute mastery, "I have not worked day and night on this case for the last two weeks for naught."

That ended the matter so far as this subject of conversation was concerned. For the father knew himself and his own powers of mind and style of thinking. And seeing the same, not only reproduced, but emphasized in the son, he knew that this grave and most delicate theme should not be made a topic of conversation.

By this time, they were getting well into the country, where they could begin to see and hear things

unknown to downtown city life. Just then, a monster of a hog slowly pulled himself out of a nearby mud hole. A great horned owl lazily flapped his way across the road not far above their heads. Another sitting upon the topmost branch of a dead tree not far away was whoo-whoo-whooing at the top of his voice, and farther away, still another was wha-wha-whaing, as if tickled almost to death at the disturbance of his friends.

The evening breeze was stirring the foliage of the forests just enough to keep the small birds that lodged among their branches chattering and talking to each other in sweet undertone.

"All nature seems to say to us, in its own way, that in making this drive, we are doing exactly the right thing," observed the father.

"Father, we could scarcely live, much less work, without an occasional breath of fresh air which can not be had in any other way."

This drive was absolutely essential, under the circumstances. For next day was to be the day of testing and it was necessary that Judge Gross should be at his best.

Penwell had been buried. Kamper was confined in an inner cell, the confusion somewhat subsided and business resumed, except in the two particular stores.

The next day, the Judge had things so arranged that he could talk to Kamper alone, where no one, not even the other prisoners, could hear them. Kamper looked at him, as he approached him, and to his own surprise, did not see in him an enemy, as he had expected, but a loving, sympathetic friend.

"Why, Judge Gross," said Kamper, "I fully expected to see you rejoicing, if not gloating over having me in your power. But I declare to you that you look as sad and heart-broken as I myself feel."

"Yes, Mr. Kamper, you are right. I have been in a state of gloom, from the moment that I was first compelled to even think of you as one of the guilty parties to this awful crime. People generally think that lawyers only work for a fee. Not I. I would gladly and willingly consent to live and die in absolute poverty, if that would establish your innocence.

"For my heart goes out in profound sympathy for you, because you have many, very many, of the most excellent qualities that I have ever observed in any man. You are an ideal business man. You know exactly how to buy and exactly how to sell. Your competitors respect you, your customers honor you and your employes fairly worship you.

"Then as to your life as a husband, father, citizen, and Christian in this city and community, it is without reproach. But still some subtle and mysterious power has at times taken possession of you and lured you elsewhere to commit the most revolting crimes. Now I sympathize with you with all my nature; and my heart fairly bleeds for your friends, and especially for your good wife and beautiful and promising sons and daughters.

"And, now, Mr. Kamper, I want you to see my situation clearly. You know that yonder is a good man with a wife, sons and daughters, of whom he, no doubt, thinks just as much as you do of yours. And if we let you go free from the crime that you have committed, then he will have to hang for a crime he has not committed.

"You know that he is not guilty of that crime and that you are. I also know it as certainly as you do, and will overwhelmingly prove it, if I have to. Now, I feel absolutely certain that if you will make an open and full confession of the whole thing (inasmuch as Penwell is dead and buried, hence cannot suffer with

you), though your crime is murder in the first degree and you will be sentenced to hang, your death sentence will be commuted to a life sentence, or possibly a shorter term in the state prison.

"It simply reduces itself to this: let an innocent man hang, or let a guilty man be imprisoned. You cannot, but even if you could and would let that innocent man hang for a crime that you yourself committed, it would be a greater crime than killing that man for his money. This, you cannot afford to do.

"To show you that I know as certainly that you and Penwell killed that man as you do yourself, I want to say that on the night of the 8th of June last, at exactly 10 P. M., you and he, by previous appointment, met under that large oak tree at the far side of Tom Bodkins' field, three miles south of the town, when you said to him, 'We will now go straight through the woods and cross Buck River at Beatty's Ford. Then we will take the cattle trail for miles along the dark foot hills.' "

"Hold on, Judge Gross," said Kamper. "How did you learn all these things?"

"Mr. Kamper, it will not do at all for me to tell you, just now. But your entire route, what you said and all that you did that night is just as clear and familiar to me as it is to you. To this, I feel certain that you will agree, from what I have said already. If you deny it, we will prove you guilty and you will have to hang. But if you will confess it, you will not hang, but will go to prison."

"Your honor, for all you are so deep as to read one's thoughts, the grandest and best man in the world and I am the most wicked of men, yet I feel that you are my friend. Yes, I am as guilty as guilty can be. My life seems to be as an open book to your great mind. And now I am glad that it is. I feel so much

better that I have confessed. Just to think that that other great crime, of letting that innocent man hang for my crime, will not have to be accounted against me.

"I do feel so much relieved that I am now ready to go to the state prison for life, or to the gallows, either, which ever the court decides. But wherever I go, I will think of you as the man of all men and as the best friend I ever had on this earth."

The confession being put in legal form by the proper authorities and in the presence of proper witnesses, the news was at once heralded to the authorities where Jenkins was in prison. They were perfectly horrified at the thought of having come so near executing an innocent man, but rejoiced exceedingly at the news of his innocence. They were so rejoiced that they entered the cell, took him upon their shoulders and literally carried him out bodily. They then feasted with him, paid his fare home, went along with him, and delivered him to his family amid the greatest shouting and rejoicing.

He was so happy that he embraced and kissed his wife, then kissed all the children; and then he would seize first one and then another, carrying them about in his arms. Thus he continued one round after another. They were all so happy that they could scarcely eat or sleep for some days. Hundreds of the citizens of Bidwell came to extend congratulations, and almost thousands dropped them a line expressing their satisfaction. But perhaps no one was more rejoiced (not even the wife) than was Miss Church, who had been so instrumental in bringing about his freedom.

Kamper was taken before the proper court where he received his life sentence and was sent away to the penitentiary, leaving Judge Nevin Gross occupying

the unique position in the minds and hearts of all his family, as the prosecutor of the husband and father, but at the same time, the acknowledged best friend that the family had ever known. Also, the Judge was left installed in his own city as without a peer as an authority in jurisprudence and criminal law.

CHAPTER IX.

OLD BEN A HERO.

The Governor was still unhappy, in a measure, from the fact that his life lacked something, he knew not what, of being complete. But he found a degree of happiness in the thought that he believed that in some way his son would consciously, or, unconsciously, solve the problem. Hence, he was intensely interested in everything that his son did and said and rejoiced greatly in every victory that he won. Especially did he rejoice in his last success.

For he declared that it settled the question forever as to his son's proper place in the bar association. Also that it confirmed his own position that the churches were all filled with hypocrites, and that they were in there to use the church as cloaks for their meanness.

For many months, two notorious desperadoes, known by the names of Jack Daws and Mike Hyde, had made the back counties perfectly hideous with their robbing and killing. Just how people came to call them by these names, no one seemed to know, for it seemed that no one could be found who had ever seen them elsewhere.

No one knew whence they came nor whither they went. People were certain that there was a great

deal of stealing and killing being done. And from the character of their work, it seemed that, in many instances, there had to be at least two men.

Detectives had virtually camped upon their trail. And no one thought they ever came as far into civilization as Bidwell, for the reason that they were never missed out of the back counties. People had commenced moving out on their account. Others appealed to the Governor for protection. So the state offered a two-thousand-dollar reward for each—dead or alive.

Not long after the killing of Penwell and the confession and confinement of Kamper, old negro Ben happened to be standing near the barn after dark, when he thought that he heard something that sounded like suppressed human voices. He stood perfectly still. The noise seemed to come nearer.

By and by, he thought he could see an object moving along the garden wall very slowly and cautiously. Later, he observed that there were two objects, instead of one, and that they were hovering close down in the shadows and, evidently, endeavoring to conceal themselves. When they reached a position directly opposite him and only a few feet away, they stopped and with the greatest possible caution, slowly lifted their heads above the wall and then dropped down with the same caution. He heard one of them say, in a whisper, but distinctly enough for him to understand it perfectly, "He is not in his room. We will waylay him on his way home from the office. We'll show him how to have our partners shot down, or imprisoned for life."

They then seemed to simply vanish from view. Ben well knew the natural way for them to go and his brain being on fire at the bare thought of his master being killed, he could have been nervous, he could

have fainted, but he reasoned that this was no time for anything but action. That what was done, had to be done quickly.

So, noiselessly, but with the fleetness of a greyhound, he went the opposite direction from the logical way for them to have gone. He went a block and then paralleled them (as he supposed) for a few blocks, when he felt certain that he had sufficiently outdistanced them as to enable him to hurry through a dark alley to the street that his master always came through, and would thus get ahead of them and possibly be able to reach and warn him before he left the office.

But, as he was about to enter the street, Judge Gross was approaching entirely unconscious of any danger. As Ben neared the street, two dark objects, crouching in the shadow of a building, and so absorbed in the approach of the Judge, feeling just a little timid at the sight of one so large and strong and thinking that they had succeeded in escaping all notice, did not discover Ben's rapid but noiseless approach.

The moment the great man passed the corner, these two masked men sprang like cats from the shadow, guns in hand, and, thrusting them into his breast, said in low but most determined tones:

"Throw up your hands!"

"Fro' up yo' han's yo' sefs!" thundered the most commanding voice that they had ever heard, just behind them, which was so unexpected and such a shock to them that, forgetting their man for the moment, they turned to defend themselves. But when they did turn, they looked into the dark muzzles of the long blue barrels of two large pearl-handled six-shooters, at the other ends of which they saw two as deadly eyes as ever sighted guns.

"Fro' up yo' han's, I say; ah I'll bo' yo', yo' triflin'

good fo' nuffin niggah-burnin' white trash! What fo' yo' all wants to kill Marse Nevin?"

Nerve always recognizes nerve wherever it sees it. And they seeing nothing but positive and immediate death in those unwincing eyes and those death-dealing guns, there was nothing for them to do but to raise their hands, guns and all.

"Now yo' all walks right up to de side ob dat dar bon."

This, too, they did, without a moment's hesitation.

"Now put yo' all's han's agin de side of de bon," he shouted. And when they did this, their guns bumping against the wall, Ben said, "Marse Nevin, take dem guns away f'om dem. Cuyaful, Marse Nevin, fo' dey's bad 'ons."

When they were relieved of their guns, he said, "Look th'u dey's pockets and takes eb'rything out'en 'em."

The Judge then removed another gun or two, some knives and a number of ingenious devices for unlocking doors, trunks, safes, etc.

"Now den, Marse Nevin, call de sheriff and I'll min' 'em. Stan' right wha yo' all is, ah I'll blow ah hole th'u yo' 'at a dog can jump th'u."

No black servant in slave time was ever more obedient to a master than was Judge Gross to old Ben on this particular occasion. Not that he feared anything, for he was not that kind of a man. Not but what he would have been willing to have taken chances with the desperadoes, had Ben not appeared. But because he had never seen any man a more complete master of a trying situation than was Ben at this time, for he said so afterward.

"I looked at old Ben as he stood there, absolutely fearless and heard him with the voice and authority of a commanding officer, ordering those desperadoes

around and saw them respond as readily as soldiers who had never known anything but the most rigid discipline. He was not the low, squatty, tenderfooted old nigger that I was accustomed to, but tall and straight. No army officer in full uniform, astride his best charger, commanding an army on the battle field, ever looked grander and more imposing than old Ben did that night."

When the sheriff and his men came and took the prisoners and it was all over, Ben assumed his old-time air of humble obedience. And dropping back, he meant to follow along after his master. But the Judge took him by the shoulders and said:

"Ben, I don't care if your skin is black, you are a man, a man among men—a man at your best in crises and in times of great danger, and, hence, one of the most needed men in all the city. From this night, henceforth, and just as long as you live, you shall want for neither food nor raiment, or a most comfortable place in which to stay."

When they reached home, he aroused the father and mother and told them all about it. They were so exceedingly thankful for what Ben had done that they all tried hard to get him to come into the parlor of the fine home, but they could never succeed in getting him any nearer than the rear door steps. There he stood humbly with his hat under his arm, while they all told him how grateful they were to him and of the abundant provision they proposed to make for him in the future.

A week later, they had learned from telegrams from many parts and from various identifications, that the prisoners were the Daws and Hyde of the back counties, that they had coöperated with Penwell and Kamper in their depredations. Besides, there were

numerous rewards offered for their capture from other states.

Ben was called before the authorities and, after hearty congratulations, they told him that the four thousand dollars offered by the home state was now ready for him and that the reward offered by other states would be ready for him as soon as the officers of those states arrived and identified the prisoners. They took it for granted that the immediate prospect of a thousand times more money than he had ever possessed before would throw him into a state of wild and ecstatic joy.

But imagine, if you can, their utter astonishment, when he resented it with all of the energy of his nature, saying:

"Naw, suh! naw, suh! I hab nuffin to do wid yo' ole wa'ds. Does yo' all think dat ole Ben has ah be wa'ded to keep po' white trash f'om killin' Marse Nevin? Naw, suh."

"But, my dear sir," said the official, "you never looked for the reward. In fact, I doubt seriously whether you knew there was any reward offered for any one, and especially for these two. And this money is yours. It belongs to no one else and you are the only man on earth who has any right to use it."

"Naw, suh, I nevah fit fo' any wa'ds an' I's not gwine to has any. I fit fo' Marse Nevin an' I git what I fit fo'. Marse Nevin he's mah wa'd. He say he's gwine gimme sumpin' t'eat and sumpin' t'wah long's I live and dat's all I ax."

Seeing that he was fully set in his ways, and that so far as he was concerned, the matter of rewards was settled forever, they could do no better than set it apart in a way that Judge Gross could, as a kind of appointed guardian, draw on it and use it for old Ben's benefit.

CHAPTER X.

THE RELIEF HOME.

Soon after the organization of the Eighth and Hill congregation, Elder Guide took for his theme, "The Helping Hand," and for his text, Galatians 6:2, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Galatians 6:5. "For every man shall bear his own burden."

He said: "We all have individual burdens to bear or duties to perform. And these we ourselves must discharge, or it will never be done. To illustrate: You cannot do my praying for me. You can do your own praying for me, for it is your duty to pray for me and you are commanded to do it. But the point is, you cannot do my praying *for me.* That, I myself must do or it will never be done and for the neglect of it, I will be condemned.

"Again, you cannot do my paying for me. True, you may pay the amount of both of our accounts, but that will not clear me. I will still owe just as much as if it had never been paid. And I would be just as guilty of neglect as if you had never paid the bill. 'But, suppose,' says one, 'some person gives me the money with which to pay it, makes me a present of it. Doesn't that satisfy everything?' Most certainly it would not, for the reason that you are only required to give accordingly as the Lord has prospered you. Now, if the Lord has prospered you to a certain amount and some friend gives you some more, the Lord has prospered you just that much more and your obligations are increased just that much.

"Again, you cannot attend church for me. This,

like the above, is an individual duty and each person must perform individual duties for himself, or, so far as he is concerned, they will never be performed. And what is true of all that I have mentioned, is true of all individual duties.

"Then there are collective or common duties, which no individual member can perform, indeed, he is not required to do so. He is only required to perform his proportionate part of such duties. For instance, all of the financial interests of a congregation can never be met by any one member. True, one member may pay all that the Lord requires of him; then, in addition to his own part, he may pay to the amount of what all the other members are required to pay, who refuse to do their duty. But that would not clear the other members. They would still be robbing the Lord just to the amount that they kept back."

He said further, "This congregation will be called upon for various benevolences from time to time. We will have helpless members or, it may be, whole families. We may have some brother or sister who is too old, not only to provide for himself, but too old to even care for himself. He may be blind; he may be sick; he may be crippled, or, he may be too weak mentally to either provide or care for himself.

"Then there may be sisters who are left with large families of small children and nothing with which to support them. Again there may be deaths in some of our own poverty-stricken families, or in strange families that may come into our midst.

"In order to do our duty in all such cases, it would not be right for any one, or even a few, to go to all of the trouble and make all of the sacrifices in order to meet all of the necessities in all such cases. This is a common duty and not an individual duty at all. It is one in which all who are able should coöperate."

The whole congregation recognized Bible instruction in all this. They recognized practical Christianity in it. Hence, under the instruction of the elders and deacons, the spiritual advisors and financial agents, the congregation proceeded, just as soon as practicable, to purchase a lot in a most convenient location upon which they erected a comfortable, but economical, house with many rooms.

They so planned it that they could add to it, as room was needed, without interfering with the architectural design of the original building. When this building was completed and was ready for occupation, Mr. and Mrs. Grace, who had been receiving some financial aid from the church, were selected to take charge of it. This not only gave them a good place to stay, but it enabled them to make a competence for themselves.

The congregation built a separate house which they did not call a hospital, but a home for the sick. This they did because so many, especially the old people, have such a horror of hospitals. This home was kept with such diligence and thereby made so very inviting, that no one was ever heard to object to going into it. And all, without one single exception, came away full of nothing but praise for the home.

And many will be there in the Judgment Day to rise up and bless the Eighth and Hill congregation by saying:

"We were hungry and ye fed us: we were naked and ye clothed us; we were strangers and ye took us in; we were sick and in prison and ye visited us."

Bidwell being in a very beautiful location, among large hills, covered with oak and vine flowers, with the clearest, purest and best water flowing from the mountains nearby, many sick people came here as a last resort. Some of these on account of years of

sickness of some one, or it may be a number of the members of the family with consequent excessive doctors' bills (the reader is well aware of the fact that the doctors are the only class upon this earth who get their pay just the same when they fail as they do when they succeed), would reach Bidwell helpless and absolutely poverty stricken.

If such came under the observation of the Eighth and Hill church (and they were always on the lookout for them), they would take the sick right to the home, look after them, giving them the very best medical aid that could possibly be secured. For they took the ground that anything that was done in the name of Christ, should be the very best. They could not think of a more God-dishonoring procedure than to make the home a dumping ground for all of the old clothes and old provisions that they could not use themselves, and would not, if they could.

They sent them just such clothing as would not make the donors blush if the beneficiaries should stand up in the Day of Judgment, in the presence of an assembled universe, with these same clothes on and say: "When we were too poor in yonder world to purchase clothing, the Eighth and Hill congregation bought these and gave them to us." Also, they gave them just such food as would not make them choke, should they, in the presence of God, the angels of heaven and all of the redeemed and glorified on this earth, sit down to the table spread with the very same kind of things furnished them by this congregation, and hear them say: "These are such victuals as this congregation furnished us in yonder world, when we were not able to provide them for ourselves."

Thus they would provide for the sick members of the families, and by so doing, the well members, if there were any such, would have an opportunity to

go out and earn something, provided they could get employment. And they would help them in every way possible in securing employment. And if the patient died, they would say to the undertaker, "Give this person a decent burial, present the bill to us, and whatever you do, say nothing about it to any one."

It was never a question with them whether the patient was a Christian, infidel or atheist. For they reasoned that an infidel and an atheist could get just as cold, hungry and sick as a Christian. And that they can and do die just the same as Christians do. They were taught and had learned from the Scriptures that they were to do good, especially to their own; but in addition to this, they were to do good unto not simply the moral, the temperate and the best of the outside world, but unto *all* men.

It was never a question with this congregation whether a person was moral or immoral, for they had also learned from the Scriptures, that all had sinned and come short of the glory of God. And that the more one was under the curse, the more he needed salvation.

They thought that if church people invited such to their homes as had splendid homes of their own; and they should come in fine apparel, with gold watches and money in their pockets, and sit down to tables bearing enough of the choicest and best prepared food to last the company a week; and after they had eaten two or three times as much as was conducive to health, they should urge them to have still more; and at the same time, some poor stranger should appear from without, about whom everything indicated that he was not only hungry, but almost starving, and ask for even some of the remnants of the great feast, and they should harshly order him away; then, their so-called religion would be a sham and a fraud.

Again, they thought that if the church people sought, greeted and invited people of means and those who were high up in social circles, to attend their services and become members, but slight, neglect and even spurn others, because of their poverty and lack of social standing, then their religion would be in vain also.

While many suspected that this relief home was under the auspices of the Eight and Hill congregation, for the reason that they saw the minister, officers and various members go there so often, still, it could be truthfully said that that fact had never appeared in any paper or directly stated by any member. For aught any one absolutely knew to the contrary, it was owned by Mr. and Mrs. Grace.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DRIVE.

Except when capturing desperadoes, whom the civil officers cannot discover, much less capture, old Ben is a hostler. Caring for horses is his business—his profession. And in the matter of feeding, grooming and preparing them for special occasions, Ben came as near to being recognized as an authority, as did his master in matters of law. While it can be truthfully said that he never wilfully neglected a horse, in any sense of the term—he would rather neglect himself any time—yet, he always prepares them in keeping with the occasion. There are extraordinary occasions, when he gives them many finishing touches, that it would be entirely out of place and a positive waste of time to do on ordinary occasions and would be of no benefit whatever to the horse—would not even add

to his appearance. And no one understood this any better than did old Ben.

Since he saved his life, Judge Gross made his old colored hostler one of his closest confidants. He would just as soon, and a great deal rather, let him into the secret of a mining proposition, in which millions were involved, or a detective scheme, in which whole bands of notorious marauders were to be captured and thousands of dollars' worth of stolen money replevined, than most any other man in Bidwell. So, upon a certain day, he went to him, and without any reservation said:

"Ben, for the first time in all my life, I am going to take the most beautiful girl I ever saw and one whom I love dearer than I do my own life, out for a drive. Will you have Roanoke ready for me?"

"Ah, yaas, suh, yaas, suh, Marse Nevin, I'll sho' has 'im lookin' lack a up-to-date hoss—I sho' will."

Even if he had felt inclined to smile at his master, he would have had entirely too much respect for him to have done so. But he did not feel at all like it, for whatever made his master happy, made him happy. The Judge's happiness was Ben's happiness.

Ben was in the barn working hard and as painstakingly as he had ever done in all his life. He felt that a very great responsibility was now resting upon him. He felt that perhaps as much depended upon his work of preparation being thorough and perfect now as on any former occasion, and even more so. He thought that if his master should fail of his purpose, he would forever afterward reproach and blame himself for the failure.

The hostler was not working a whit harder than the Judge was at this time in his room. He, too, felt that he had a very difficult task before him. A task, the right performance of which, would have more to

do with his present and future happiness than any other that he was ever before called upon to perform.

Therefore, his shoes looked like mirrors, his suit was very expensive and faultlessly clean and well pressed. He had the latest and most up-to-date collar and tie with a diamond stud sparkling in his glistening white shirt front, his heavy black hair was in perfect order and his strong smooth-shaven face looking as rosy and tender as a woman's.

The hour came, and when the Judge stepped out under the admiring eyes of the father and mother, he looked like a prince, indeed. Roanoke also never looked better—fat, sleek and velvety, with broad hips, limbs tapering to the hoof, long heavy mane and tail, eyes aglow and nostrils distended. No horse ever showed his good blood and kind treatment more readily than did Roanoke at this time.

Moreover, the driver's heart was light. He could not suppress the fact and did not try to. He appeared to want everybody to know it and every one who saw him did know it. When he drove up in front of 950 Sunset Boulevard, he was greatly surprised to find Miss Church residing in so imposing a residence. Why, it was similar to and quite as expensive as that of his father.

But, while he was surprised, he asked himself the question, "But why should I have thought for a single moment that she should occupy any less imposing structure? I cannot account for it in any other way, than that ordinarily those engaged in the kind of work in which she is, do, of necessity, reside in less expensive houses. And that is accounted for usually from the fact that people of large means are so engrossed in business affairs that they neither have the time nor the disposition to do that kind of work.

"While as good people as the world ever has, or ever will, produce, have been born and reared in what we would call hovels, still I cannot help but reproach myself just a little for ever having imagined anything but the very best as a place in which for Miss Church to reside."

As he reined in his splendid animal and stepped from his shining buggy, there passed out, from between the massive columns of this great home, a human figure, which nothing that he had ever seen, read, heard of, or even fancied, could equal.

"She is a creature of harmony!" he said to himself, as she approached. She was tall with a comparatively small head, set high upon a fine slim throat, with sweeps of abundant, soft golden hair (which was accentuated by the long, dark lashes), gentle confident-expectant blue eyes, the corners of her mouth curving bewitchingly, and her chin melting away into the fine lines of her lovely throat. Her faultless form was graced with a lovely habit of gray which lay about the person as the glove the hand; and the poise of her head and shoulders was so graceful as to cause every one, man and woman, whom she met to take more than a casual look at her. They would generally look at her the second time. Although she was conscious of all this, it seemed to have made no impression upon her, one way or the other.

But at this time the Judge was not doing all of the thinking by any means. For, Miss Emily Church was making some observations as well. As she walked toward him, she said to herself:

"We have prodigies in mathematics, but that is all they know. And, in many instances, they are the very meanest of men and women. They make their homes perfectly hideous for their wives, husbands or children. We also have men and women who have a

genius for music without study, but that is all that they know. And what is true of the mathematical prodigies is equally true of the musical prodigies. And what is true of the mathematical and musical prodigies, comes near being true of all prodigies.

"But there stands a man who is truly great in every sense of the term. Physically, he is certainly the grandest specimen of our race that I have ever seen; tall, well proportioned, handsome, beyond description, and I know him to be kind, generous and profoundly intellectual."

When Roanoke finally took them in charge, he seemed to have realized, by animal instinct, or, in some other way, that he was drawing no mean couple. And that his master Ben's reputation was now at his disposal. So, no horse ever looked or acted better. The rich velvety finish that Ben had given him, his splendid carriage, his high head, intelligent eyes, distended nostrils and especially his artistic foot work that afternoon, was not only a credit to Ben, but such as would recommend Roanoke to the most fastidious lover of horses.

People whom they passed in the street and roads would almost stare at them as they passed, and after they passed they would crane their necks and look back at them. People would stand in their doors and appear at the front windows and just look, look, look! They meant no disrespect and so the couple understood it. And there was no "put-on" by the couple, and the people understood that, too. All simply followed their own natural inclinations.

The day was resplendent with golden light. They passed over hills, mountains and glens, beneath great, spreading, shadowy oaks under some of which well kept South Downs were resting peacefully, but upon their approach, they would spring to their feet, rush

aside a few paces, then stop and look at them, wild-eyed, until they passed on.

Under others, rolling fat cattle would be lying and chewing their cuds in solid comfort, but would rise up and move lazily away just in time to prevent Roanoke, whose ears were turned down on his neck, from biting them, or the wheel from striking them, and would stand without turning their heads even to look.

They have now hastened along the bank of the stream until they have come to the large spring from which the stream flows through the city of Bidwell, several miles away. It is a beautiful spring of cold water. It is surrounded by a natural grove of sycamores, from the very tall, straight and almost branchless, to the large but low bending, making natural seats near enough to the ground for them to sit comfortably.

Just at this hour, the grass was a carpet of beautiful green. The sun was piercing through the trees and giving the soft, brusselly blue grass a golden gleam.

After taking a cool drink themselves and giving Roanoke some from a bucket that was placed there for the purpose, they took their place in one of the natural seats in a sycamore.

"Oh, but isn't this a nice seat, though?" said Miss Church.

"It is like all of nature's work—it is done right," said he.

"But, Judge Gross, do you think that nature always does things exactly right?"

"Most certainly, I do. There is not a single contradiction, when properly understood, to be found in all the volume of nature. The reason that some of us cannot accept some books is because they contain so many contradictions and inconsistencies."

"But aren't there apparent contradictions in nature."

"To what do you refer, please?"

"For instance, in some places, frequently, after grains are planted, nature sends the rain and the sunshine, causing the grain to germinate and grow up, but just before it matures or can be harvested, the same nature sends hot winds, hail or storms and literally destroys it. Does that not look like at least an inconsistency in nature?"

"Indeed, it does, Miss Church. But when properly understood, there is no inconsistency about it."

"And might that not be true of at least some of the books that you have in mind?"

"Certainly, it might be possible."

"Before one should speak of inconsistencies in nature, don't you think that he should make an honest and earnest effort to understand them properly?"

"To do otherwise would be dishonest with nature, himself and those who came under his influence."

"Don't you think, too, that before one rejects a book, as containing contradictions and inconsistencies, he should first make an honest and earnest effort to understand it properly?"

"I most certainly do," said he, very thoughtfully, as one wondering if what had just been said, or some part of it, might not possibly apply to himself.

"So, then, as upon everything else, we exactly agree upon this, too, don't we, Judge Gross?"

"Of course, we do. It never will and never can be otherwise. For, so far as I have been able to discern, from the very first time that I ever saw and heard you talk, *we have been one.*"

"Do you mean that, Judge Gross?"

"With all my heart, soul, mind and strength!"

"I would rather hear you utter that language than

any one in all this world. I appreciate it so much, because when you say a thing, I know that you mean it and can be relied upon. And oh, with what sympathy, dignity and wisdom you responded to that mission of mercy. Under your astute mind, the truth, however deep it may be buried, and however mysterious it may seem, is brought, not only to the surface, but it is made to stand out until all can see it, and see the wisdom and justice of your decisions."

"Yes, Miss Church, and I want to say to you that you were never out of my mind a single moment during that whole proceeding. Without the inspiration of your face, as it appeared to me and impressed me the day you came to me—and does yet—I never could have had the heart and courage to have dug so deep into such apparently hidden mysteries and prosecuted them so vigorously."

"Judge Gross, you completely over-estimate what I have done."

"Impossible! Eternity alone can do you justice in properly estimating your work in this life. But, if it were possible that I should over-estimate what you do, it could only be accounted for by the fact that you are my ideal. The personification of all that I desire, look and long for. To me, you are perfection!

"Miss Church, I cannot refrain longer! I must say it! I feel as if I should die if I should not be permitted to deliver myself fully to you here and now! There seems to be an irresistible power within, without, around and above, which compels me to say to you without any reservation, mental or otherwise, that I love you! I love you, to the extent that there absolutely is not and never can be any room in my heart for any one else! I know you believe me!"

"Most certainly, I believe you! It would be so wholly unlike you to say that which you do not

mean. It would break my heart to hear you say that you do not believe me and likewise to hear you even intimate that you thought that I do not believe you! I believe you, you believe me and we both believe each other, don't we, Mr. Gross?" she said, looking up into his face, with a charm in her voice, as well as in the expression of her face, that he could not possibly resist.

"A most charming summary of the whole situation," said he.

"And," she continued, "as I intimated, when you said that we are one, I appreciate it beyond all human expression, and would a thousand times rather hear you say it than any other man on this earth! It adds so much, oh, so very much, to the joy and happiness of my life!"

"Then, Miss Church, you love me? Can you speak that sweet word? Oh, for the world, please don't fail me now! This is the crisis of my life! I have, for the present, lost sight of everything else and I feel that my heart must break, if I am to be denied this, the only desire of my life. Say that you love me! Do say it."

"With all the faculties of my nature and with all my powers of mind and body, I do love you, my dear, good Mr. Gross!"

"My dear," said he, "we are now on the mountain top! Everything is sunshine and flowers now! Answer just one more question for me and then my cup of joy will be full to overflowing. Will you be my wife?"

"Although you are the dearest friend whom I have ever had and the one whom I love with all the energies of my nature, still I am compelled to say to you that, at present, there is one insurmountable obstacle, an impassable barrier to our marriage. And

this one thought would break my heart and I feel as if I would die right here, were it not for the fact that that obstacle can, must and I believe will be removed, and we will become husband and wife."

"My dear, that last was, indeed, precious language to me. That you love me and that there is a bare possibility of our becoming husband and wife is like the sudden appearance of the sun after having seen nothing but dark threatening storm clouds for many days. Will you now tell me what that apparently insurmountable obstacle to our marriage is?"

"Not to-day, dear. It cannot be removed in an hour. It cannot be removed in a day. But, believe me, *it will be removed!*"

"Am I responsible for the obstacle? If so, I am perfectly willing and ready to make every possible effort to remove it right here and now."

"No, dear, let's not discuss it to-day. We will discuss it until we both understand it, the next time we meet. But to-day, let us forget everything else and remember only that we love each other."

"Of course, my cup of joy now lacks just one single ingredient of being full to overflowing. But, for the present, as you say, we will forget everything except that we love each other."

CHAPTER XII.

TOM DOUEY.

There never has been and probably never will be an absolutely perfect physical system—one that not only never has had, but never will have disease of any kind whatever, one that ever has been, and ever will be, absolutely unsusceptible to disease of any

kind. So there never has been, and never will be, a congregation of worshippers without, at least, one member who will be overtaken in faults from time to time. Just as there are tens of thousands of material substances in the world which will appeal to the various appetites of the body, so there are many besetting sins and temptations with which to contend, and by which the weaker, or the lesser informed, are frequently overcome and made to turn to the right or the left, made to sin by omission and commission—in word, thought and deed.

And just as some bodily injuries are so slight that the person receiving them can scarcely notice it, and others cannot notice it at all, so in the religious world, there are sins and temptations so slight that those committing them or who are influenced by them, scarcely realize that they are doing wrong, and others will never find it out, except by open confession.

Then, as there are many diseases and accidents, so violent in their very natures, that they can only be met by heroic remedies and vigorous treatment, so there are many wilful, deliberate and premeditated sins sometimes committed by church people, so violent and vicious in the very nature of things, that the only way to save those committing them, is to snatch them as brands from the burning.

Finally, there are accidents and diseases in the physical world, so violent that it is an utter impossibility to save men from them at all, for physical death is inevitable. So there are sins, so heinous in their character, and so wilful and deliberate in their planning, that those who commit them die spiritually—it is an utter impossibility to regenerate them.

In the Eighth and Hill congregation, Tom Douey was the erring one. He had naturally a rough exterior, receding forehead, which was not a whit too

broad; heavy, shaggy eyebrows that not only extended entirely across, but appeared to come together in the center with such violence as to deflect them both half way down the nose. He had small, black, bullet eyes, sunken far back into his head, a long nose and heavy jaw.

Before he made any pretensions to Christianity, he was called a "tough" by the people who knew him. He chewed, smoked, swore, gambled and fought. It was thought, by some people, that worry over Tom's waywardness was what sent his father and mother to premature graves. But some said, "With such a rough exterior it would be exceedingly difficult for Tom to be anything but just what he is."

While there was scarcely anything in all the city that could be called wicked but what Tom seemed to have some direct or remote connection with it, still, it seemed that somehow there never was a time that the civil authorities could just lay their hands upon him and say, "Thou art the man."

By and by, being thrown in with some of the young men from the Eighth and Hill congregation, in their daily occupations, he was attracted, not so much by what they said, as the way in which they conducted themselves. They did not say so much about the Bible and the church, but they demonstrated by their actions, and way of living, that one can live a good, Christian life under any circumstances. They did not necessarily have to possess the wealth of the world, get large pay or work few hours, in order to live a Christian life.

Others were cursing the employers, the long hours and small pay, and, of course, despised the employers and in turn, were cordially hated by the employers, who, sometimes on that very account, put the malcontents to inconveniences.

But these Christian boys said nothing about these things, never slighted their work, and as a result, respected their employers, and did many little extra turns for them. And, in turn, the employers respected them, saved them in many ways from the hardest work and occasionally gave them extra pay.

Tom was not so obtuse as he looked, for he closely observed all these things and finally said to them:

"Boys, I see that you miss all of the worry and get all of the advantages, if there are any advantages coming. But how can you do it? For I am certain that I never can."

"Well," said the boys, "you have tried your own way for a long time, and no one knows the result any better than yourself. And perhaps no one is or can be any more dissatisfied with the results than yourself. Now it seems to us to be the height of folly for you or any one else to continue in a way that produces nothing but most unsatisfactory results. You might try our way and if the results are not satisfactory, it will not be much trouble to change back or do something else."

He did finally try their way. And the longer he kept at it, the less inclined he was to sit and listen at the profanity and fault-findings of the opposition. He became more and more pleased when he happened to be sent out to work with one or more of the Christians, where he was out of hearing of the others. And when he was not at work, he shunned them altogether and naturally sought the company of the Christian boys, to do which, he would necessarily have to attend the Eighth and Hill church, for the boys were always there on the Lord's Day.

He had not attended long until he saw that it was the teaching of the Scriptures and the fellowship

of the congregation that enabled the young men to do as they did while they were at their work.

So, with as pure motives, holy desires and spiritual aspirations as ever prompted any one in an effort to do right, Tom Douey obeyed the Gospel and entered the fellowship of this ideal congregation.

The members all received him kindly. While they did not and could not expect him to be any special uplift to the congregation, still they knew that it was their duty to receive him. They said: "We know that he is extremely weak, morally and spiritually, and the Lord has shown no partiality in giving Tom an overdose of intellectuality, but from the Bible teaching, we also know that his soul is worth just as much as any other man's and that the salvation of our own souls depends upon our making an honest effort to save Tom's soul."

CHAPTER XIII.

BETTY LOVEBY TRIES TO REFORM.

"I am now fifty years of age and I have lived a life of assignation for the last twenty years, and now have about me twenty girls who are going the same way," she said to herself, as she sat in her private room one day just before nightfall and wondering what the night might bring forth.

"My God, what a life I have lived, and how many men and women I have been instrumental in misleading! Oh, if there is a just God He is under no obligations to me! And if there is a heaven of joy and happiness, what remote right have I there? But if there is a hell in which the wicked are to be punished for their sins, how can I possibly escape? Just to

think back twenty years—it seems but yesterday; then to think that unless I outlive any of my relatives, that that is all that there is left to me of earthly existence and then I must go and stand in the presence of a Being, infinite in wisdom, goodness, mercy and love! And there before Jehovah's awful throne, under the eye of God, and in the light of a burning world, I must give an account of the awful life that I have lived, and all my words, thoughts, and deeds shall pass before my mind, in such bold relief, that I cannot possibly overlook a single one of them! The bare thought of it horrifies me! I am afraid! I am excited! Oh, what can I do?

"I will go this very night and begin to undo the wickedness that I have done. But where shall I go? Where and how am I to begin? My wicked reputation is so well established that all either know me or know of me. Will any of them receive me? Will any help me?

"Dr. Fop has a strong, powerful and most influential church—strong financially, numerically, socially and I do hope, spiritually. If any church in this city can help me reform, Dr. Fop's can. I'll try—I can't do any more than fail."

She, by touching electric buttons, arranged for the purpose, called all of the girls into her private apartments. When they were all in, she said:

"Girls, I am troubled beyond the power of tongue to tell! It seems that I must die, if I cannot find relief somehow and somewhere! You all know and I realize it more than any of you possibly can—I am older and I have lived this life longer than any of you—that the life that we are now living is exactly the opposite of everything that is good and right and pure and holy. It is a mockery of the laws of God and nature.

"It is the most sickening, God-dishonoring and

heaven-defying business that the devil has ever conceived. At the time I entered it, I had what I called excuses, but to me now, since I have come to myself, they appear to be so sickeningly silly that I blush even to think of them. And I could not look any one in the face, if I thought he had any idea of what it takes to constitute right, and offer them as excuses now.

"I advanced them then and made use of them, simply because I was wrong myself and no one knew it any better than I did. My conscience was calling to me long and loud and rebuking me most unmercifully. Oh, if I had only heeded the voice of conscience at that time, I would not be suffering what I am now. And in all probability, you girls would not be where you are to-night. At least, I know that some of you, indeed the most of you, would not.

"Now, girls, from the very depths of my inmost soul, I beg and plead with you, to-night, to forgive me for ever having influenced you to live this way! I am going to begin to-night to repair the miserable wreck of a life that I have lived thus far, first by telling you girls that you can all go. But please do not go so far but what I can keep in touch with you. For I am going to find relief, if relief is to be found anywhere. And when I do find it, I want to see all of you again, for I want to recommend the same to you.

"Don't I know that most of you are here, not as a matter of choice, but through my influence and the influence of the horrible, wicked emissaries of the devil whom I employed. Some of your mothers think you are clerking in stores. Others think that their daughters are in school or studying music. And my conscience will never be satisfied until you can invite your parents to come and find you doing the very things that they now think you are doing."

"Oh, do please help us, Miss Loveby," said a number—especially of the younger girls.

"What in the world has got into the old lady?" said one of the older ones, as they went out. "She is becoming quite sentimental all of a sudden, isn't she, though?"

Betty's mind was on the possible judgment awaiting her soul, unless there was some way to get right with God. Although she had been a girl whose beauty all would notice, and is still beautiful while a stout woman, yet the long years of dissipation had done their dreadful work, as was clearly indicated by the heavy lines about her eyes and mouth, caused by her brazenness, when determined to continue in her wickedness, and her sorrow when thinking of making a change.

They were having a series of "blessed" meetings at Dr. Fop's church. This the members were saying everywhere they went and they were going most everywhere and offering this fact as an inducement for people to attend the meetings. "The Lord is with us in power. The Holy Ghost is accomplishing wonders among us at this time," they would say.

One night a sad woman, genuinely sorrowing over her sins, veiled and dressed in black, appeared at the church and shame-facedly dropped into the rear seat. One of the good (?) sisters recognized her and said:

"There is old Bet Loveby! I do wonder what she is sticking herself in here for? I think that she has done enough meanness already without coming in here to disgrace our church."

She hurried around and whispered to as many as she could and sent word to all the rest, that "old Bet Loveby is in the house and let us all make it a point to snub her, and then she will know that she is not wanted here."

When he was sure that the people were all assembled, Dr. Fop, in the most pompous, dignified manner of which he was capable, entered the auditorium from his study in the rear. He ascended the steps and instead of entering his closet and shutting the door after him, as the Scriptures direct, when a man is to pray in secret, he knelt, not at the chair directly behind the pulpit, for fear all might not be able to see him, but at one of the side chairs, where he knew with certainty that all could view him.

There he remained with his broad, fat back to the audience, while he spent about ten seconds imploring heavenly aid. He then faced the audience. Not a hair, not a mustache, was out of place—he, himself, being judge. It was exactly the way in which he had fixed it, as, for fear he might displace a hair, he would carry his silk hat in his hand from home. And there was the inevitable louse-road stretched over the top of his head which was so like a long, narrow white ribbon that it could be seen plainly by all in the audience.

His text, on this particular occasion was: 1. Timothy 1:15. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Whatever criticism might justly be passed upon Dr. Fop, there was one thing that all had to admit, that is, that he was a scholar and an orator. In fact, that was the trouble with the Doctor—some must have told him as much. And some went so far as to say that they thought that some one must have told him that he was handsome, too. Otherwise, he could not possibly be so fussy about himself. On this occasion, as a logician, theologian, Bible expositor and scholar, he did himself great credit, and he was an "honor [sic] to the congregation." And all of the members present,

who were not too much absorbed in their own disgust at "old Bet," as they called her, sanctioned all that he said by a nod of the head or an approving smile.

In his discourse, among many other good things, he said:

"Just as Christ's resurrection from the dead, demonstrated the truth of the resurrection and hence the possibility of the resurrection of all men, so the salvation of the one man Paul—especially as he was the chief of sinners, establishes the fact of salvation and hence the possibility of all men being saved, if they will only come in God's own appointed way. This is plainly set forth in the prophetic language concerning the gospel era, 'Come unto me all ye ends of the earth.' Also in the blessed Saviour's own language, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light and ye shall find rest to your souls.'

"Again in the very language of the world-wide commission which he enunciated, saying, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.' Also in the language of Peter to the Gentiles after he had witnessed the miraculous demonstrations in connection with the conversion of Cornelius. 'Now we know that God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.'

"And John, looking forward to the final consummation of all things, saw an innumerable multitude whom no man could number, and he asked who are they? and he was told that these are they who have come up through great tribulations and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Of every nation, kindred, tribe, people and tongue."

The preacher compared the many precious "comes"

of Gospel and prophecy with so many honey drops. To illustrate which he would hold up his beautifully dimpled hand, with fingers apart, and speak of the blessed "comes" in such a beautiful way that one could almost see the honey drops falling from the tips of his fingers, that is, if he could keep his eyes off the brilliant diamond ring that he always made it a point to wear on the hand that he always held up on such occasions to illustrate by long enough to listen to what he was saying. He made it most tender and touching! He closed his elegant discourse by ringing the changes upon the words *every* and *whosoever*. "Let every one come. Whosoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely," he would quote.

In connection with these words he laid wonderful stress upon the fact that Jesus came to save sinners; to seek and to save the lost. Also upon the fact that Saul, the *chief* of *sinners,* was saved. "Now then," said he, "if any one is to be lost, it is his own fault—it is simply because he will not come.

"Then come to Christ and salvation now. Now is the day of salvation, to-day if you hear my voice, harden not your heart, but turn unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon you, and unto our God who will abundantly pardon. Come, then, to-night. God says, 'Come,' Christ says, 'Come,' the church says, 'Come,' and oh, the angels are now leaning over the shining battlements of heaven anxiously awaiting your decision! If you will decide to come, then heaven will ring throughout with angelic song. In the light of the infinite interest that heaven and earth are taking in you, will you not come to-night, while you have time and opportunity. Let nothing hinder you. Say in your heart, 'Though the ocean may cover me and the mountain press me down, though

the earth may tremble and the heavens fall, I will come to the Savior this night.' "

When he closed this passionate appeal, Betty Loveby, who had been weeping as if her heart was breaking, during the entire discourse, but especially during the invitation, came forward—everything about her indicating that her heart was filled to overflowing with sorrow and her very soul bowed down with grief.

The minister did not know Betty Loveby except by reputation, and hence did not recognize her as she came forward. However, he could notice looks and whispers of disapproval all over the house, but could not understand what it all meant until he asked the woman her name. When he heard her name, all was made perfectly clear.

The doctor, being a politician and a diplomat, as well as a preacher, had no difficulty whatever in managing the case. He said to her in a full, round voice, so that all, especially the objecting ladies, could hear and understand him: "Miss Loveby, you will kindly meet me and my wife at my residence to-morrow at 3 P.M., and we will talk this matter over."

He knew that this would give the ladies time to get their work in and thereby enable him to know exactly what to say to her when they met.

She went away that night feeling as sad and distressed as if she were then on her way to judgment. She was no fool, and could "see through" the call for the next day as clearly as the minister could. She knew that it was unusual to postpone so important a matter. She knew exactly just why they had made an exception of her case. She now expected, absolutely, no assistance from this great church.

But in her frantic desperation she was determined

to meet the appointment. This she would not think of doing were it not for the fact that she could not find it in her heart to blame them very much for not receiving her, for she now thought less of the life she had been living than they did because she realized its horrors and they did not.

The next day there was a constant stream of women pouring in at the doctor's residence, all of exactly the same mind and all, in substance, told him the same thing, that is, "If you take that woman in, every woman in the church will leave it."

And not a few men came and said, "We do not believe that it will be a wise thing to receive Betty Loveby on account of her awful reputation. It would disgrace, ruin, yea, break up the congregation. We would have to lock up the house, and you would have to look for a new field of labor."

It required no elaborate arguments to meet the doctor's case, because he thought just as they did. His only object in making this appointment was to spar for time, so as to give others an opportunity to file their objections. Which objections he could use as a kind of scaffolding for his own excuse in not receiving her.

At the hour appointed here she came—the same shame-faced, forlorn-looking woman that she was the night before.

"Well, Miss Loveby," said that dignified, pompous-looking gentleman, "I am, indeed, very sorry, but there is such a general protest among the members—especially among the ladies, that, under the circumstances, it will be impossible for us to receive you into our followship."

At this announcement she burst into a flood of tears, and her body trembled and shook with emotion, as she said, in deep, smothered tones, "Oh, I

am lost—there is no salvation for me, I have been so very, very wicked!" And, among many other things, she said amid her sobs, "I don't blame the church for not wanting me among them, for I have been so wicked!"

And thus she continued to talk so pitifully about her lost condition that, while it did not affect his wife a particle, except to enrage her more and more at the thought of the effrontery of a woman with such a reputation to ask for fellowship in "our church," still it was so exceedingly pitiful as to touch the doctor's heart of stone to the extent of prompting him to kneel and offer a short prayer for her. He prayed that the good Lord might watch over her, protect her, keep her and save her. He prayed that the people of God might protect her, help and encourage her in every way possible—the very thing that he and his own congregation had refused to do. Then, in the words of a certain wag, "putting on a face long enough to eat oats out of a churn," he said, "Good-by, my sister, God bless you."

Heaven never witnessed a more desolate scene than the departure of Betty Loveby that afternoon, so weary and heavy-laden with sin, a heart filled with sorrow and a soul bowed down with grief!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OBSTACLE DETERMINED.

"It is wonderful the amount of business that Nevin transacts, but the ease and grace with which he does it is much more wonderful to me," said the Governor to his wife one evening, as the son departed for his office after dinner to attend to some urgent business.

"The thought of failure seems never to enter his mind. And I am inclined to think that fact is one of the secrets, if not *the* secret, of his almost invariable success.

"While I was what the world called successful, yet I must acknowledge frankly that Nevin has something, at least in part, that I have not and never had. And it seems to me that just in proportion as he possesses that which I do not, exactly in the same proportion does his happiness transcend mine.

"See that bird there in the shrub? Notice its plumage of golden gloss. Hear it call and continue to call for its mate. After a persistent call, watch it turn its head to one side, while it awaits a response. And see what patient, black, liquid, expectant eyes it has. That is Nevin. He calls, so to speak, then, with apparent joy and expectancy, does he patiently await results.

"And, mother, do you know what it is that I have about concluded constitutes the difference between his happiness and mine?"

"No, husband, I do not know, but would certainly like very much to know. What is it?"

"It is this. I discover that he has more confidence in, more sympathy for and more patience with the people than I ever had. I am about to conclude that if the church people could, by laying aside their hypocrisies, and by practical and consistent lives, conquer his supreme disgust for the church and everything pertaining thereto, I believe that his happiness would be complete.

"I had comparatively little patience with anybody, while his impatience seems to be limited to the church people. You notice that the very mention of the churches and their pretensions seems to fire him through and through."

"Yes," said the wife, "and I cannot blame him much either, for it is about as he says, they say and do not."

"No, wife, the straw that broke the camel's back with Nevin and seems to have destroyed his confidence in the church people almost entirely was his deal with that Mr. Glib, the Sunday-school superintendent, who made such great pretensions. for that property on Tenth Street.

"Nevin told him just what he wanted, and the superintendent, who was a realty man, looked around until he found this property, and thought that it would exactly fill the bill. So he took Nevin out to see it."

" 'How much will I have to pay for this property?' said Nevin.

" 'If you will give me three or four days,' said the superintendent, 'I think that I can get the owner down to thirty-four hundred dollars.'

" 'All right,' said Nevin, 'if you can get it at that, I'll take it.'

"The superintendent then went to the property owner and said to him, 'If you will give me three or four days, I think I can get the purchaser up to thirty-one hundred dollars.'

" 'All right,' said he, 'if you can get thirty-one hundred dollars for it, let it go.'

"In a few days he came to Nevin and said, wringing his hands as he did it, 'Well, I finally got him down to thirty-four hundred dollars.' Nevin said, ' I'll take it then.'

"The same day the superintendent went to the owner, wringing his hands, and said, 'Well, I have had a time of it, but I finally got him up to thirty-one hundred dollars.' The owner said, 'Let him have it.'

"A few days later the seller met Nevin and said, 'What did you pay for that property?'

" 'I paid thirty-four hundred dollars.'

" 'Thirty-four hundred dollars!' said the man. 'Why, he said if I would give him three or four days, he thought he could get you up to thirty-one hundred dollars. And finally, when he came to me, he said that he had had an awful time, but that he had finally succeeded in getting you up to that amount.'

"Nevin told him that the agent told him that if he would give him three or four days he thought he might be able to get him down to thirty-four hundred dollars. And that finally he came to both in the same way, that is, wringing his hands, saying that he had had an awful time, but that he had finally succeeded in getting the one down and the other up to a certain amount.

"He took a rake-off of three hundred dollars; besides, he got his regular commission on the thirty-one hundred dollars. He lied to both of them, he deceived both of them, and he robbed both of them. Now, how can the boy be expected to have any confidence in church people?"

On their former drive Roanoke was just as well groomed and equally proud of himself. Judge Gross and Miss Church were just as elegantly attired; the sun shone just as brightly, and the birds sang just as sweetly, still the two were not so conscious of these things then as now.

To them it was not like travelling by the bright and brilliant sunlight, by moonlight or even starlight. For to them both it seemed that they were travelling by the light of one dim, distant, glimmering star, that is, the vague star of hope that the only barrier in the way of their marriage might be removed.

But, of course, other people, the birds of the air,

the fowls of the heavens, and the beasts of the field knew nothing of their state of mind. So, to the two, it seemed that all were holding high carnival that day. The people seemed to be talking louder, laughing heartier and singing more than ever before.

Great clouds of blackbirds would appear in mid-air, and, as the sun shined upon them at different angles, they would form themselves into all kinds of fantastic figures. The cattle, instead of waiting for Roanoke's threatening attitude to force them to rise lazily and move slowly out of the way, would spring to their feet at the sight of them, and with tails over their backs go romping down the road, kicking up their heels, and presently come back, passing on either side of the buggy at such maddened speed that Roanoke would lay his ears back, hesitate and wonder what it all meant.

Here in a green pasture they could see the mules chasing the calves at a break-neck speed in order to let off their surplus energies. There the lambs were gamboling, jumping logs and running down into and quickly up out of ditches. While, amid the branches of the trees on both sides of the road, sweeping and bending low with heavy foliage, there was a perfect chorus of variety song, participated in by every variety of bird known to them.

These things would have thrown people, not wholly absorbed in one single thought, into perfect ecstasies and lifted them to the very mountain summit of exultation.

But they were all lost for this one day on this special couple. For, while ordinarily no two were more capable of enjoying these things, on this special day they were completely lost to everything in the world except the thought of the obstacle between them.

To one a life of marital happiness depended upon

the removing of this obstacle, and to the other the weights and balances of eternity, so far as one singularly valuable soul is concerned, are suspended upon the removing of this same obstacle.

"Now then, dear," said he, as they comfortably seated themselves in exactly the same place at the spring, where they sat on the preceding occasion, "state the obstacle and I think that, by uniting in our efforts, we can overturn it here and now."

"No, Mr. Gross, it is not so easy as that. It is taller, broader, deeper and heavier than you anticipate. Otherwise you would not think of its removal in the short space of one hour. You remember that I told you that it could not be done in an hour, or even in a day."

"Yes, I remember that very well."

"With men wholly different from yourself, it might be done by simply mentioning or suggesting it. But not so with you."

"What!" said he. "Do you think that I am worse than other men?"

"Just the opposite, my dear, for you do nothing simply for show, and you have no patience with anything but realities; hence you will not—you cannot—take anything of vital importance for granted. From your very nature you cannot surface things. You have to investigate and go to the root and foundation of any theory or proposition before you can accept it."

"That is true, and I do not think that any one should accept any proposition of vital importance without first investigating it."

"Neither do I. And I want you to understand me. I do not mean to criticize you for so doing, but to most heartily commend you. For certainly anything that will not stand the closest investigation and the

most careful scrutiny should not be accepted by any rational, thinking and intelligent man or woman."

"Yes," said he. "In all my observation, if a thing is what it should be, the more you investigate it the more clearly you see that it is right. It is like gold tried in the fire. The hotter the fire and the more severe the test the more dross you get rid of and the more pure the gold becomes."

"Yes," said Miss Church. "And, as the Savior said, 'Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the lily of the field.' That was literally true then, is now and ever will be. For, if you place a lily under a microscope, the more powerful the instrument the more of the beauty, symmetry and perfection of the flower can you see.

"But place the most beautiful robe that ever graced the person of the great king of Israel under a microscope, and the more powerful the instrument the coarser and the more like ropes and rags does it appear. The reason is that the lily is God's workmanship before it has been touched by the hand of man, while the robe is God's creation after it has been touched by the hand of man.

"In this illustration, we see a striking difference between God's way and man's way of doing things. We can clearly see that the inspired statement that God's way is not man's way, and that his way is as high above man's way as the heavens are higher than the earth is borne out by nature.

"Now, God is the author, center, source and great fountain-head of all that is good, true, right and proper-true and righteous, altogether. Hence, the more you investigate and the more you apply the rigid laws and rules of criticism to that which is right, the more of its beauty, symmetry and perfection can you see."

"Oh, yes, truth is always best by test," said he. "And this you have illustrated most beautifully. Error alone suffers by test. And whenever you see any one advocating a system, but is opposed to investigation, discussion or debate, you may rest assured that his system has at least some weak places, and that he knows it.

"Now, Miss Church, believing that we are perfectly agreed thus far, will you kindly state the obstacle, that we may get at it, if possible."

"Judge Gross, I know that you will not think too hastily and judge too harshly when I mention it. Wait until we talk the matter all over first. I know that you will be astonished, if not astounded, when I tell you what it is."

"But please do not hesitate to tell me what it is, for the worst has to come sooner or later, anyway."

Then looking into his large, gray, expectant eyes, and concentrating all her powers of mind, heart and soul, she said, "You are an unbeliever."

"Is that the obstacle that you have had in mind all the time?"

"It is."

"And you think that I can be made a believer?"

"Most certainly I do."

"What makes you think that I can be made to believe?"

"Simply because Christianity is true, and you are honest, true, noble and willing to investigate. Not only willing to investigate, but perfectly capable of investigating."

"I thank you very much, Miss Church, for your kind words. But may I ask, are you a believer?"

"I am."

"And do you belong to some church?"

"I do."

"Of what church are you a communicant?"

"The church at the corner of Eighth and Hill streets."

"You say that you are a believer. Will you kindly tell me what you believe?"

"I believe in the existence of the God of the Bible. I believe in the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the authenticity of the Scriptures—that all Scripture was given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect—thoroughly furnished unto all good works, as the Apostle Paul says."

"But, Miss Church, do you think that all of the churches are right?"

"Of course not, for the Bible teaches them to all be one. And the very fact that they are not all one is positive evidence that either some of them or all of them are not exactly right. No doubt, but all have more or less truth. It is not at all likely that any one would make it a point to adopt nothing but error. While it may be that some have a great deal more truth than others, it is quite possible that no church has the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but Mr. Gross, the Eighth and Hill congregation is trying to attain that position."

"But don't you know that the churches are all filled with hypocrites?"

"If I know my own heart, I am not a hypocrite," she said, so sweetly that it caused the great man to severely reproach himself for ever having said that which was susceptible of any such construction. "I have always thought that hypocrites were the very worst of people; people who pretend to be what they are not; people who pretend to have that which they do not possess; those who say and do not; those

who never acknowledge that they have faults, but always claim to be more righteous than any others. Now, dear, do you think for a moment that I belong to that class?"

"No, indeed, Miss Church, please do not think that I had any such a thought in mind, although I have to confess that, if my question is to be taken too literally, it is susceptible of that construction. But I doubt seriously whether you could name anything in the world that was farther from my mind at the time."

"Then, if I am an exception, it cannot quite be said that the churches are all filled with hypocrites. Besides, I dare say that there are hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands who are prompted by absolutely pure motives and holy desires in all that they do."

"But we all have to admit that there is a great deal of hypocrisy in the churches, do we not, Miss Church?"

"As sad as it is, that is too true. It is a startling fact, an alarming reality. But do you disbelieve in Christianity simply because there is hypocrisy in the churches?"

"That is not only what keeps me from accepting Christianity, but it is what keeps and has kept millions from accepting it. If Christianity is true, and people have to accept it in order to be saved, untold millions have gone hence without preparation because of the hypocrisy in the churches."

"I know that every word that you say is true, but does it appeal to you as exactly just, fair and right to fail to accept the genuine because there are counterfeits extant? The Bible says that pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and keep yourself unspotted from the world. To ask you if you

believe in this is to answer my own question. For your whole life thus far demonstrates it beyond the possibility of a doubt."

"Of course, I do believe in the principle therein enunciated. But there is manifest hypocrisy in most all of the churches."

"Yes, but when we speak of Christianity and recommend the same to others we mean Christianity. We mean the genuine, the pure and undefiled, and have no reference whatever to the counterfeit. When we speak of paying or receiving a dollar, of course we do not mean a counterfeit. For a counterfeit is not a dollar at all. So hypocrisy, in the name of Christianity, is a counterfeit and not Christianity at all."

"My dear, you do certainly stick to your subject with a logic that no man on earth can assail. Yes, I am compelled to admit that it would be just as reasonable to reject the genuine dollar because there are and ever have been counterfeit dollars extant as it is to reject Christianity because there is hypocrisy or counterfeit Christianity extant.

"But, Miss Church, don't I visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions and keep myself fairly straight morally?"

"Indeed, you do, and from that standpoint I could hold you up before the church members as a model. But, Judge Gross, why do you do these things?"

"Why do I do them? Because I think, yes, I know, that they are right."

"Ah, yes, you have now inadvertently hit upon the real difference between you and me. I am like you—I think and know that they are right, but that is not the reason that I do them."

"But what other reason can you have for doing them?"

"I do them because God, in his Holy Word, commands me to do them," she said.

"What is the difference, just so we do them?"

"Let me ask you a question. When you do a thing simply and solely because you yourself think and know that it is right, whom are you obeying?"

"I must confess that I am obeying myself, only."

"And if you are worshipping at all, whom are you worshipping?"

"Again, I must confess, as ridiculous as it may seem, that I am worshipping myself, only."

"Now suppose for a moment that the Bible is the book of God and that in it is revealed the way in which we are to worship the Most High God, can you think of anything more God-dishonoring and Heaven-defying than for a poor, weak, fallible, mortal man to obey and worship himself instead of the God who created the heavens, the earth and all that in them is, and who giveth us life, breath and all things?"

"Your logic is most unmerciful and cruel in the extreme, for it certainly would be presumption personified for any one to obey and worship himself. You make it sound like and look like egotism raised to the *n*th power. But is the Bible true, inspired of God?"

"I say that it is. You say that it is not. And that is the point to be settled between us. I believe the Bible with all my heart and it tells me to be not unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. You can see yourself that if an enthusiastic believer and an enthusiastic unbeliever be compelled to live together, it will be a mere chance if theirs will be lives of happiness."

"I know that is true and I see the wisdom in it. I might be prevailed upon to accept the Scriptures and

become a member of some church, if I could find one that is practising pure and undefiled religion. One, for instance, whose members are doing what two men are reported to have done for two comparatively strange young men, while one was lying crippled.

"They met their every want and never even told the boys their names and never asked the boys theirs. One of them was present at the Receiving Hospital when the horrible wound was dressed, went right along with them to their room and remained with him, gave him water, helped him to move and assisted him in every way possible until his partner came.

"As soon as he came, at the request of the afflicted man, he related the history of the accident to him and immediately excused himself for a few moments, while he went and brought a nice little pillow that looked as though it had been made for the purpose.

"When the injured knee was placed upon it, it seemed to become easy, at once. He then told the well man that he would have all that he could do to attend to the patient and that he would send their dinners to them.

"Protests availed nothing. For their meals were brought to them right along until the crippled man was better. Not only did they take their meals to them, but the next day, after Dr. Fop had been there and wanted to pray while the man was in paroxysms of pain, and the well man had virtually driven him off, and some young lady, appointed by the flower committee of her church, had brought them a bouquet and they had told her that it was not flowers that they needed just at that time, the same man who had waited upon him at first, brought another man with him and the two, seeing that the man was in agony, almost delirious and about to die, proceeded at once with the deftness of skilled physicians or sur-

geons, to loosen the bandage and apply proper remedies.

"He was relieved and fell asleep—the first rest that he had had for many hours. After he was convalescing and was approaching health, a young lady, nicely dressed, presented them with a nice cake and at the same time, without mentioning it, she left a beautiful bouquet of carnations on the table by the side of the cake. That is what I call right living. It was not only what they did, but the spirit in which they did it. They never even told their names. And if the boys ever found out, they had to through inquiry.

"Also, we have another striking illustration of the same kind, only on a larger scale. It seems to be done in the same spirit, too. I refer to the Relief Home on Bond Street. It is large and contains many rooms. Besides, they have a well-appointed building away off to itself for the sick. Only the penniless are received in this home.

"And, until the sick are entirely well, there is not one single want overlooked. They have nurses who thoroughly understand their business and as good physicians as the city affords. When they are well, their doctor bills are all paid. By whom they are paid, the patients never know. If the patient dies, he is given a decent burial and the bills are all paid.

"At the main building, when persons come or are sent without money and have been hunting, but have failed to find work, they keep them, make inquiry about them and assist them in securing employment.

"Now, these two instances serve to illustrate exactly what I believe in and the way in which I think that it should be done, as well as the spirit in which it should be done. If this is Christianity, I believe in it, and if any one can convince me that the Bible teaches it, then I will believe in the Bible, too.

"Now, Miss Church, you have your work thoroughly outlined and I predict that to remove this obstacle, that is, convince me that the above is Christianity, that the Bible teaches it and that there is a church on earth that is practicing it, will not be at all easy and not quite so certain as you had anticipated at the beginning.

"For, we all know that, instead of meeting all of the bills themselves, the almost invariable custom of the churches is to adopt every plan, scheme and trick imaginable, in order to raise money. They send out their soliciting committee, printed bills and circulars. They have every possible variety of socials to raise money. They have lectures, dedications and membership fees to various societies, to raise money. And so on, almost ad infinitum.

"They will receive money from any source whatever—from saint and sinner, believer and unbeliever, the sober man and the drunkard, the moral and the immoral, the Christian and the pagan.

"Not only so, but if they are accomplishing anything, they talk about it, mention it at their various meetings, announce it from the pulpit, in the papers and sometimes in book form.

"They not only publish to the world what they are doing, and have done, but what they are going to do, even if they never do it. I tell you I have seen pictures of splendid church buildings in secular papers, which the church members say that they are going to erect some time in the future. And in some instances, I have known years to elapse before the buildings were completed. In the light of all these things, the church people have impressed me as the most boastful and most unscrupulous people in the world.

"My dear, I fear that you are disheartened by

this time and will concede that your proposed task of making a believer out of me, is an impossible one —that the obstacle is insurmountable. That it is so tall, broad, deep and heavy that we can not get over it, around it, under it and will not be able to lift it out of the way. And you and I will have to mourn our way through life over the impossible."

"Judge Gross, you have now delivered yourself fully and I am so glad that you have. But, at present, as you do look so distressed and troubled, and as it is too late for us to talk further now, I know that you will allow me to silver the dark and heavy lines that linger about your noble face before we go."

"My dear, you are my life, my joy and my happiness! And, without you, the present gloom will not only remain, but it will increase in density throughout my earthly existence. Yes, do what you can for me, or I will have to go away gloomy, despondent and melancholy from this place to which I came an hour or two ago with a brilliant spark of hope."

"I myself am almost in ecstasies," she said. "Your own distress is all that keeps me from being happy! For I had anticipated all that you have said and, in the light of the fact that you have stated your position and condition of mind so fully, I am enabled to say to you now that, at our next meeting, I will spring a surprise upon you that will not only 'silver-line,' but you will at least partially dispel the gloom that now seems to so completely overwhelm you."

"You dear, sweet angel, you do have the most gracious way of saying things! It acts like a magic upon me! Since your last precious words, I do really feel better already. And in the full assurance of unbounded confidence, I will look forward, with constantly increasing interest, to our next meeting."

CHAPTER XV.

TOM DOUEY IN TROUBLE.

Just as any one will devote a great deal of time to even a little finger, if it is weak or afflicted, so the congregation gave Tom Douey a great deal of attention, because they well knew that he was extremely weak, spiritually.

Just as all the other parts of the body will become sympathetic toward an impaired or failing member—the eyes observing its condition, the feet walking for the remedies, the ears listening and the heart forcing the blood to it, all under the supervision of the will, in order to support the weak member or restore it to health; so, all the spiritually healthy members of this ideal congregation united in their efforts to assist Tom Douey in every way possible, simply because he was weak.

For a long time, in his own weak way, he did what he could. He attended all the services of the church, spent as much time as he could in the company of the church people, and, best of all, studiously avoided his old-time associates.

Of course, in his weakness, he lost control of his temper a few times and used language that was not wholly in keeping with his profession as a Christian man. But, to his everlasting praise, he would always come and acknowledge it and ask the church to forgive him. The church, of course, always rejoiced at the privilege of so doing. They believed that God also forgave him.

But during all this time the emissaries of the devil were not idle. His old associates who had been accustomed to free drinks at Tom's expense, and winning

his money over the gambling table, missed it all now. They studied by day and by night to devise some ways and means to win him back to their ranks.

"Tom," they would say every time they got an opportunity, "do you know that we all miss you more than any one who has ever left us? We thought that we appreciated you when you were among us, but we did not realize what a capital fellow you were until you were gone.

"Sam Betley and Joe Getting [these were star pool and poker players whom Tom knew to be his superiors] say that they have been all over the country and seen all kinds of men and all kinds of players, but Tom Douey is the most royal fellow and the most promising pool and poker player that they have ever met."

While for months he resisted all their advances in a way that they could not possibly misunderstand, which was to the supreme satisfaction of the church, by and by such flattering and honorable (?) mention by those who were at the very top in their own circles began to have its effect upon him.

He did not stop to think that it was possible and altogether probable that Betley and Getting had never said anything of the kind. Or, if they had, they did not mean a word of it, and that it was only a miserable scheme to get him back into their ranks—that they wanted him back simply because he always worked, and hence usually had more or less money, and was the "easiest mark" they had ever met.

Eventually their influence over him began to manifest itself in his occasional absence from the meetings of the church, the reduction in his hitherto small contributions and his general shyness upon meeting, or while in company with, church people; also in his

occasional unjust criticisms of the members and the general workings of the church.

But, as physicians sometimes fail utterly to properly diagnose a case, and are, on that account, helpless in providing the proper remedies, so in Tom's case the members could not possibly ascertain the exact nature of the influences that were being brought to bear upon him. Hence they were helpless, and all of their efforts seemed futile. But, as it is not proper to amputate a limb of the physical body, however much it may be afflicted, until all has been done that can be done, and its remaining a member will endanger the life of the whole body, so this church understood the Bible to teach that they should never withdraw the hand of fellowship from any erring member until they were certain that they had done all that they could do, and that he had become so steeped in sin and so determined to continue therein, that his remaining a member would endanger the life and good influence of the entire congregation.

They visited him, talked with him, reasoned with him, read the Bible to him and prayed with him, but all without avail. In spite of all the influence they could bring to bear upon him, he finally ceased to attend the church altogether.

Sam Betley and Joe Getting had been told how their names had been used and what a powerful influence it had had over Douey in prevailing upon him to return. And, taking advantage of this fact, Betley said to Tom late one night in all possible secrecy, "I want you to meet Getting and me at my room to-morrow night at eleven P.M. I have an important matter to lay before you both. And, Douey, you are absolutely the only man in all this city whom I would let into this scheme with Getting and me."

Feeling somewhat flattered at the thought of being made a confidant by these stars, he said, without reluctance, "I'll be there, and don't you forget it."

The hour came and the three appeared. Sam closed and bolted the door, sat down by the table and said:

"Now, boys, draw your chairs close up to the table, for we will have to talk very low. For God's sake, it will never do to let any one hear us, or in any way catch onto our scheme. Now, look here, listen to me. Before I mention what it is, I want us all to bind ourselves to absolute secrecy. I don't simply want to bind you two, but I want to bind myself as well. Isn't that square goods, fellows?"

"That is square, all right," assented both.

"We want to bind ourselves," said Betley, "under a solemn oath that if any one of us is ever caught he will not squeal on the others. I am perfectly willing to bind myself. Are you both willing to do the same?"

"I am perfectly willing," said Getting.

"So am I," said Tom. "A man who is not willing to do his part and measure up equally with partners in business of any kind, I don't care what is it, is no man at all," continued Tom.

"That is right, and if we had not had every reason to believe that you were just that kind of a man I certainly never would have selected you as a partner in as important a business as I am about to mention to you," said Betley.

Poor Tom, it did not dawn upon him that the other two had talked the matter all over, and that Getting was just as familiar with the scheme already as Betley.

"Now, let us all hold up our right hands and say that I solemnly swear that if caught I will die before I will tell on either or both of the others," said Betley.

They then all held up their hands and repeated in concert:

"I do solemnly swear that if caught I will die before I will tell on either or both of the others."

"Boys," said Betley, "does either of you look on betting of any kind whatever as a strictly right and legitimate business, when you come right down to the moral right or wrong of the thing?"

As they hesitated a moment, as if not quite comprehending his meaning, he continued:

"If there is a just God in heaven, does either of you think for a single moment that he would recommend gambling to any one, and that he would advise any one to try to make money in that way?"

"Oh, thunderation, no," said Getting. "To ask that question is to answer it. For any one who has any sense at all, or has any notion of what it takes to constitute right and wrong, knows that God would not recommend gambling to any one."

This was the exact answer, word for word, that he had promised Betley that he would make in Douey's presence, if he could prevail upon him to attend the meeting.

"Of course, everybody knows that God would condemn betting of every kind," said Tom.

"Well, then," said Betley, "we are engaged in wrong-doing in gambling anyway, and all for the money. Is that not true?"

"That's what we are," said Tom. "We do not have to be told this by any one, for we know this ourselves. In the absence of any law of God or man on the subject, we would still know that the thing is wrong—our own consciences would tell us this."

"Then," said Betley, "on this principle that a good general will send forth his men and have a great many destroyed at once in order to close the war,

rather than prolong the war and thereby have a great many more men destroyed, inasmuch as we are engaged in wrong-doing any way, why not we do a little greater wrong and thereby make money a little faster?

"I say a greater wrong. But since I came to think about it, I am not right certain that it is a greater wrong. For this that I am about to suggest will probably not happen to the same man more than once in a lifetime, if at all.

"It is this, boys," said he in a very soft whisper—so low that they had to put their heads close together. "I know an old man who lives all alone, and who has a sufficiency of this world's goods. Besides, he received a thousand dollars in gold the other day, and has not put it in any bank yet. It makes no difference how I know it, but I do happen to know where the old guy keeps it hidden. He certainly is an ingenious old rip, for you could not guess in a week where he keeps it.

"Well, sir, if he don't keep it under the old wood box that sets by the old cook-stove in the kitchen I am a liar. Would you have ever guessed it, boys?"

"Never in God's world," said Getting.

"That would have been the last place that I would have ever looked," said Douey.

"I will leave it to you both," said Betley, "if it would not be worse to drag that old sinner out here night after night and gamble his money away from him than it would be for us to just go there to-night and compel the old son-of-a-gun to cough it all up in one lump."

"Of course, it would," said Getting.

"I can only judge him by myself," responded Douey. "And I know that I myself would a great deal rather

that they would take all of my money at once if they are to get it all anyway."

Here again his logic failed him. For he did not stop to think that this old man was not a gambler, and that they would not and could not drag the old man out for one night, much less night after night, and hence would never get a dollar of his money if they had to get it through gambling.

"Enough said," said Betley. "He is that old slingchisel who lives by himself down here on Emmet Street. You both know exactly where he lives. I could have gone and taken it alone and kept it all, but you two men have done me many good turns, and I tell you I am not the kind to forget favors.

"We will not have a bit of trouble, for I could go down there blindfolded with my hands tied behind me, and that old scapegrace would get his money, put it into my pocket and thank me for the privilege of giving it to me. We will wait until we are certain that he is in bed, and then just before we reach the back door we will put our masks on. I will knock on the door, and as he opens it you both push your guns into his breast and tell him, in low tones, that you will not hurt a hair of his head if he will keep his mouth shut and not say a word. We will then tie and gag him, I will get the money, and we will walk away. It will be just as easy to do as it is to tell it."

"We are ready for business," said the accomplices.

The whole scheme worked like a charm, so far as getting the money was concerned. And they all succeeded in getting started from the house. But, unfortunately for poor Tom, the man living at the next door had been out on a long trip, and it was very late that night when he reached home. As he was on his way from the barn to the house, he saw the three

men appear at his neighbor's rear door, and, thinking it was very unusual, he stood still to watch them.

While it was not very light, still it was light enough to see that they wore masks, and he saw their guns as they pointed them at the old man. As soon as he was convinced that they were robbers, never having had any experience along this line, and not knowing what else to do, he quickly dashed into his own house, seized his shotgun and took his station in his own rear yard again.

They were such adepts at their business that by the time he reappeared they had done their work and were leaving the house. He took one deliberate aim at the bunch, and Tom Douey went down. No one could tell how badly the other two were hurt, if at all, for they never could get any clue to their identity, and they took all the money with them.

The alarm was given, the neighbors called in, the officers notified, and the ambulance came to take Tom to the Receiving Hospital in company with the officers. Upon examination, they found that his wounds were so slight that it was a surprise to all that he went down at all. After they were dressed, they took him to the jail, where he remained all night.

When he fell the night before, he lost his mask. So when people came running from every direction, many of them, as soon as they would see him, were heard to say, "That is Tom Douey. I didn't know that he was a robber; I thought he was a church member. I thought he belonged to the Eighth and Hill congregation."

The next morning Elder Guide, his minister, was the first to go and see him at the jail. When he had him where he was quite certain that no one could overhear them, he said:

"Brother Douey, you have been overtaken in a

grievous fault, and the hearts of the entire congregation go out in profound sympathy and love for you. We have done all that we could do for you while you remained with us in the church, or where we could get at you."

"Yes, indeed, Brother Guide; not one of the entire membership has ever neglected me in a single instance. If I had followed the advice of the elders; if I had followed the advice of the fathers and mothers in Israel; if I had followed the advice of the young men, the young women, the little children—even the least little one, just passed the line of accountability, become responsible for his sins, obeyed the gospel, and was nothing but a little babe in Christ—if I had even taken that little one's advice, I would not be here now.

"Just as long as I remained under the influence of the church, I was all right, and, in this, I feel certain that the church will bear me out. But when I got out from under the influence of the church, I at once passed under another influence. And, oh, that influence is what brought me to this." He then broke down and cried most bitterly.

"Yes, my brother," said the minister. "We all know that this robbery was not of your planning. And on this very account the court will, no doubt, be lenient with you. But you have violated the civil law, and it is right that you should be punished. The Bible says, 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.

" 'Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

" 'For rulers are not a terror to good works, but

to the evil. Wilt thou then be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he [the civil officer] is the minister of God to thee for good.'

"Now, I, as your minister, cannot ask the court to release you. And if the court should do such an unheard-of thing as to call me in to advise with him concerning your case, my advice would be to punish you. It would not be right for you or any other violator of the law to go unpunished.

"While it almost breaks my heart to think that you have made it necessary to punish you, yet, since it is necessary, I want you to be punished, and the church desires the same thing. Not because we are your enemies, but because we are your friends. It would wreck and ruin any country in the world to let those who violate the law go unpunished.

"Go, my brother, and take your punishment, but remember that we are all thinking of you and praying for you every day. Remember also that when you have paid the penalty for your own violation, then there is nothing against you. Come back to us and we will gladly receive you with open arms, and ever treat you as before."

"Oh, Brother Guide, after your kind words, so full of wisdom, justice and right, I feel better. My spirit has returned, and I feel as if I would like to receive my sentence as soon as possible, that I might get through with it sooner.

"For, since your talk, I feel like I want to live to get my freedom again that I may have another opportunity to make an honest effort at right living. Brother Guide, when you came, I had given up. I was ashamed to see you or any one else—I wanted to die."

Judge Gross, attracted by the suppressed voices, stopped just around the corner, where they could not see him, and overheard all, but knew neither man.

CHAPTER XVI.

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

"Father," said Judge Gross, as they took their accustomed places on the front porch after dinner one evening, "I saw and heard something to-day that appealed to me as altogether out of the ordinary."

"And what was it, son? You know that we are all, more or less, like the Athenians, anxious to learn something new."

The mother also drew her chair a little closer that she might hear every word that her son was about to say.

"I was passing through one of the corridors of the jail to-day, and my attention was attracted by one of the kindest voices, it seemed to me, that I ever heard. It was very much suppressed, and it was this fact as well as the kindness of the tone that attracted my attention.

"I stopped just around the corner, where they could not see me, but I could make out distinctly every word they were saying. It proved to be some man talking to that notorious Tom Douey. And, father, it was so very different from any conversation that I had ever heard that I simply could not help but do just a little eavesdropping.

"The nicely dressed, gray-haired old gentleman without was doing all of the talking. The prisoner seemed at first to be so completely broken up that he did not desire to hear any one talk. But that

man hushed his sobbings, interested him and finally put him to talking.

"The man proved to be the minister of the congregation of which Tom Douey was a member. He told Tom that the entire congregation was grieved to the heart, not that he had been captured, but that he had committed the crime. He said that inasmuch as he had committed the crime, he and they all were glad that he had been apprehended. And that, as sad as it may seem, they were all exceedingly anxious to have him punished, commensurate with his crime, because it is right. That it would do Tom, the congregation, the community and the whole country a gross injustice to let him, or any one else, go free after having violated the criminal law. Besides, he said that the Bible teaches that we are to obey the powers that be, for they are the ministers of God.

"Thus he talked on. He never berated the prisoner and never derided the government in a single instance, but insisted upon it that it was wicked associations that had made him do what he had done.

"You know, father, that is altogether different from the way that church people usually talk. You know and I know that the general disposition on the part of the church people is to do just like Dr. Fop did, that is, try to shield their own members, it makes no difference what they do.

"Testimony has to be absolutely overwhelming before one church member can be made to believe that another member is guilty. They seem to think that simply because a man or a woman belongs to one of the multitude of religious organizations nowadays he should be exempt from the law. But if a man is not a member of some church, then they are the first to condemn him. And if he happens to be an unbeliever, then they seem to think that he should

be condemned almost without testimony—that he should be condemned on general principles.

"Not so with that man to-day, for he thought and said that even if a man is a church member, if he violates the law, he is no better than any other outlaw and should be punished. His talk made an impression upon the prisoner, too. For, when he was done, you should have heard the prisoner himself talk.

"He said that the whole congregation had done all that it was possible for it to do for him. That every member, from the least to the greatest, had shown wonderful interest in him, and that if he had followed the advice of the least, the youngest baby in Christ that held membership in that congregation, he would not be where he is to-day. He said further that when the man came to his cell, he was broken-spirited—he had given up entirely—but that the man's kind words had revived his spirits, and that he was then anxious to receive his sentence that he might enter upon it at once and thereby get through with it the sooner.

"He said that, encouraged as he was, he felt that if he lived to get out and have his freedom again, he would make another honest effort at right living. He said that when he got out he did not propose to be over-sensitive on the subject—too ready to notice or resent anything that might possibly be construed as a slight, on account of his imprisonment.

"That he knew, as well as anybody, that he had disgraced himself, and that he could not reasonably expect the people to have as much confidence in him and make as much over him as they had before his disgrace.

"But the minister assured him that when he came back the whole congregation would receive him with

open arms. I never, in all my life, saw a short talk work such a change in a man."

"Indeed," said the Governor, "it is a very unusual case. I have been in active life for over fifty years, and Dr. Fop's action, when Penwell was killed, is a fair sample of what I have seen of what is called Christianity. His idea was to take that sly old hypocritical fox's innocence for granted and mob the custodians of the law. And, so far as my observation has extended, that is about what is to be expected of the churches generally.

"But what has disgusted me with them perhaps more than any other one thing is that most all want the very finest church that can be had, to build which they will resort to all kinds of schemes to raise the funds; some schemes that are so glaringly and shamelessly immoral that they cause dissatisfaction in their own congregations which it takes months and sometimes years to live down and, in a few instances, never.

"They will organize, appoint committees and subcommittees and send them out to literally 'drum' the world, the flesh and the devil in order to raise funds to pay for this magnificent structure, the picture of which we have been seeing in the secular papers for a long time. If they make a success of begging enough money out of the people, when the building is completed, they brag, boast and gloat over what *the church* has done.

"Then, after the people have virtually built it, paid for it and presented them with it, they are not willing to pay the taxes on it, but plead the pauper act and send committees to wait on legislators-elect and lobby at state capitols to have a law passed to exempt church property from taxation.

"Then, again, they talk about their Bible teaching

peace, love and harmony! And just look at the thousand or more warring sects into which the church has been divided. Just listen at the storms of debate and the voices of vituperation, when even the ministers of the same denomination meet in conference or convention.

"I myself feel very much like the great, so-called heathen scholar, who, after having delivered an address (which was a classic, judging it from a standpoint of scholarship and literary merit) in this country, asked, 'Why are there so many denominations in Christianity?'

"When one doctor of divinity of about the same tribe of Dr. Fop, placing his hand upon the great scholar's shoulder, said, 'Ah, my brother, you are only in the vestibule of the church.' The great scholar said, 'Yes, but when I stand in the vestibule, look out on the arena and see the gladiators fighting among themselves, I feel much more like fleeing from the vestibule than I do of entering the arena.'"

"I have felt the same way, father, and do yet. That is why this particular case made such an impression upon me. The thought came to me that, since this one man has proved to be an exception, if the facts could all be known, might there not be many such exceptions? You know that you met with so many dishonest persons that you were sometimes made to wonder if all men were not dishonest.

"But, father, we both know that, while there are innumerable dishonest men in the world, there are also innumerable honest men, even if they are just a little difficult to find sometimes. So, although genuinely good, Christian men and women and genuinely Christian congregations may be difficult to find, yet may there not be many such?"

"I don't know," said the Governor. "It may be so."

The son was never heard to talk in this way before by any living man. The father was utterly astonished. Why, it seemed that the son, in a measure, stood for the defence of the church. The secret of it all was that a ray of light had passed out from the home of truth, through its minister, and had shone upon Judge Gross and, through him, less brilliantly perhaps, upon the parents.

Nevin Gross could not resist the beautiful spirit of the iron-gray gentleman toward the man who had committed a grievous crime, and the Governor could not altogether resist the influence of the same, as it came to him through a son, who was never influenced by anything except realities.

After the son had retired, the father said to his wife: "Nevin is finding a degree of real happiness through a channel that never appealed to me once in the whole of my public life. He has more confidence in people than I ever had. He seems to love them more and more, as the years go by. And it affords him a joy that I never experienced.

"And, wife, who knows but what this may be an unction of the sweet, well-flavored fruit that is to come to us through the evolution of the noble principles that he enunciated at the table one evening?"

CHAPTER XVII.

JUDGE GROSS IN A TEMPERANCE CAMPAIGN.

As in everything else, he investigated it until he was abundantly able to touch the top, sides and bottom of the whole liquor question. He could, from memory, give the exact analysis of every intoxicating drink manufactured anywhere in the world. He

could state the annual production, in gallons, of every country beneath the sun.

He could tell, with the technical exactness of world-renowned authorities, the deadening and destroying effects of the various kinds of intoxicants upon the physical, mental and moral system.

It was his profound knowledge and thorough understanding of the question that made him a temperance man. His convictions upon the subject were so strong that he would have been a temperance man if there had not been another on the face of the earth.

He said: "The thing is wrong in its inception; it is wrong in principle; it is wrong because it is wrong, and cannot, by any sane and just rules of reasoning, be otherwise. It is constitutionally wrong." And, at this point, he quoted copiously from state and national judicial decisions to prove it.

The opposition never saw a man espouse any cause who was dreaded more than they dreaded Judge Gross. They knew that they could not simply palm off just anything upon an unsuspecting people and compel them to receive it. They knew that they would have to do something more than simply set up claims for their own side and denials of the claims made by the other side. They knew that they could not exaggerate or minimize anything.

For the reason that their giant opponent was prompted by pure, sacred and most solemn motives in all that he was doing, and that he felt duty-bound, honor-bound and heaven-bound to make the effort of his life.

And while all they knew about his promptings was that they were true, they did not quite know all of his promptings. And it may be that he himself did not quite realize all. But there was to him, at least, one other moving spirit that had to be taken into

account—a spirit that made him abnormal in strength and power, which enabled him to unconsciously rise clear above and go entirely beyond himself, that is, the spirit and influence of Miss Emily Church. Neither she, Elder Guide nor the members of that ideal congregation, which was the home of truth, could begin to realize the far-reachings of their pure and holy influence.

The opposition could not help but love and honor the great man because of his honesty of purpose, purity of life, great learning, powerful logic and burning eloquence.

They well knew that every statement that they would make would be analyzed; that he would stand before the great concourses of people that would naturally greet him everywhere and look at everything analytically, that is, take them apart, piece by piece, and examine them seriatim, and then look at them synthetically, that is, take these same pieces, one at a time, examining them carefully and lay them back in the order in which they belong. And they knew it was woe betide the man or men who would dispute any of his statements or deny any of his conclusions.

No man ever marshalled forces upon the battlefield with more commanding dignity and more dashing bravery than he marshalled the forces of temperance and righteousness in this memorable battle. He donned the armor and walked with the firmest step that the city of Bidwell had ever seen. Men engaged in deadly combat, club-musketing with a formidable enemy, never fought harder than Judge Gross did at this time.

In describing the crime, the starvation, the heart burnings, and the deaths that follow in the wake of the saloon business and intemperance, he would, by his magnetic and harmonious voice, brightness and

brilliance of intellect, incomparable fluency of language, invulnerable logic, transcendent eloquence and Gibraltic determination, make the whole liquor traffic stand out like a horrid nightmare, and completely overshadowing the city like a mighty pall of death.

While he was engaged in his masterful efforts, he seemed to have been completely lost to everything else in the world. Not a particle of his nature was in reserve. His whole being, physical, moral and mental, was combined and put out at testing strength when the whole hideous system, in all of its phases, collections of dishonesty, theft, murder, cold, hunger and death, would pass before their minds in such vivid and bold relief that the people would scarcely realize where they were.

They would sometimes have to pause and think a moment in order to recall in what part of the city the meeting was being held that they might get their bearings and know in what direction to start for their homes. At the pictures of moral midnight darkness, the people would become absolutely horrified—even some of those who had stood for liquor hitherto were almost afraid to go home in the dark, they were so ashamed and conscience-stricken at what they had been doing and the way in which they had been living.

He so completely overwhelmed the city that long before election day many who had been most ardent liquor advocates were heard to say:

"Who can withstand the power of that man?"

Others were heard to say: "And who should want to withstand him, for he is right? Everybody knows it. Has he not proved it by a demonstration and beyond the shadow and possibility of a doubt? We might just as well give it up, for we are already beaten, and we know it. I wish that to-morrow was election day, and then it would all be over."

When all was over, everybody, on both sides, said that not only was it the cleanest campaign that was ever made, but the most complete and most satisfactory victory that was ever won.

No city was ever prouder of and felt more honored by any citizen than did the city of Bidwell of Judge Gross. And no citizen in Bidwell appreciated his brilliant effort and success in so good a cause as did Miss Church.

She would at times, in spite of herself, have to smile at the awful confusion and the utter helplessness of his opponents, as they were tossed hither and thither by his mighty cyclones of eloquence, and literally shaken and dashed to pieces by his mighty earthquakes of logic.

Then again, at the time and even after she got home, as she could see the great man carrying everything before him and fighting, with exactly the same energy as if he thought he were fighting alone, engaging a most deadly foe, she could not help but break down and actually cry for joy, only to think that they had such a noble master to fight such great battles for them, and who was always so certain of signal victories.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BETTY LOVEBY FINDS A HOME.

After her absolute failure, and worse than failure, at Dr. Fop's church, she did not know what to do. "I thought," she said, "before I made the attempt, that I could do no more than fail, but I did. I not only failed to receive any assistance, but I received the discouragement, the scorn and absolute hatred of

perhaps the greatest, strongest and most influential church in this city. And, if I cannot get help from that congregation, especially in time of a great spiritual revival, when the Lord is with them in power, and they are all under the influence of the Holy Spirit, how can I hope to find any encouragement whatever from any other congregation?"

For some days she simply groaned, suffered and almost died. And, feeling that something must be done, she tried again and again at different churches, but met with the same scornful opposition.

By this time she had become so desperate that she could neither eat nor sleep. When her suffering became so great that she could not endure it longer, she resolved to make one more desperate effort.

"I shall go to the Eighth and Hill church this evening," she said, "and ask for help and admittance, and if they refuse I shall not give way to tears, as I have been doing, for I have already shed tears until it seems that I have no more tears to shed.

"My heart is breaking! I am desperate, but my fountain of tears seems to have been exhausted. If they refuse me, I shall insist upon it. I shall argue the matter with them. For, while I know that I have been a desperately wicked woman, and for twenty years I have lived a horrible life and prevailed upon many others to do the same, still it does not stand to reason that when I want to quit that they are doing right in discouraging me.

"If I should give way to their discouragements and scorn, I would continue in my life of shame, and I verily believe that before God they would be as guilty and responsible for my sins as I would myself. But I shall not be overcome by any discouragements.

"I have been reading the Bible to find out my duty, if possible. I have not only found out my own duty,

but, incidentally, I have found out the duties of the church people. I have learned from the Bible the church's duty toward just such characters as myself.

"I have learned that there is salvation for me. For the Savior himself said, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' And, oh, I have labored so hard and am so very heavy laden with sin, and I do so much desire rest!

"Again, I read where he said, 'I came to seek and to save the lost.' I also know that I am lost and all of the churches know the same. He said, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." I am a sinner and lost, and hence I am one of those whom He came to seek and to save. I shall tell the Eighth and Hill congregation all this, if they refuse to receive and help me."

Somewhat strengthened and encouraged by her own determination, but especially by the lessons and exceeding great and precious promises that she had learned from the Word of God, she set out to attend the services at the above-mentioned church, several blocks away. Somehow she felt now that she was going to accomplish something, if not this evening she would in the very near future.

"There certainly is a church somewhere to be found," she said, "that is teaching and practising the things taught in the Bible. And if there is such a church, I propose to find it. One of two things is true, either such a church can be found, or they are all wrong, and God will not accept the worship of any of them."

As she went on her way the moon showed her kindly face, as if wishing her God-speed. The few stars that were so brilliant that they were not quite eclipsed by the brightness of the moon were quiver-

ing and sparkling in their weak efforts to indicate that they not only existed, but were on her side.

As she passed under one great arc light after another, the crowds of people were surging up and down the streets, going to churches of their own choice, to do which great throngs of people were seen to pass right by one beautiful church building after another and would not go in, and why? Because they were not churches of their choice.

And in going to churches of their choice they would frequently collide with hundreds of people, who were on their way to these very churches that they had passed, because they were churches of their choice. This kaleidoscopic view of church-going people taught Betty Loveby, who was now an honest and earnest seeker after truth, that there was something vitally wrong.

"The Bible," she said to herself, "says for them to all be one; to be of the same mind, the same judgment and to speak the same thing. This the churches are not doing. They are not all one, they are not all of the same mind, and the same judgment, and they are not all speaking the same thing."

She began to feel that, while she herself was a miserable, gross and awful sinner, still she had company both in and out of the churches. She now felt that she wanted to hasten along. She wanted to get there. She was anxious to see the people, hear the sermon and present her plea.

She entered this large, most comfortable, but not especially imposing church building several minutes before the services began and took her place on the rear seat.

To many she had been pointed out on the streets as one of the worst characters in all the city. And

those to whom she had not been pointed out knew her well by reputation.

Notwithstanding this fact, during the few minutes preceding the regular services, scores of both men and women, old and young, came to her, shook hands with her, asked her name, and said, "We are certainly glad to see you here to-night, hope that you will enjoy the services, and please do not leave for a while after the benediction, for we want you to meet more of our members."

When the minister appeared in the pulpit, he glanced over the congregation, and, discovering this sad-looking woman, dressed in black, occupying the rear seat, he at once left the pulpit and went down the aisle, took her by the hand, told her that he was glad to see her, and finally prevailed upon her to move a few seats further forward.

Elder Guide took for his text Romans 1: 16. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

"I believe it with all my heart," said Betty Loveby to herself, "therefore, there is salvation for me. I know there is."

The minister then proceeded: "The gospel is as broad as the human race and as deep as human needs. Its importance stands out in the fact that it is the only thing of the kind in all the universe of God. You notice that the apostle doesn't say a gospel, but *the* gospel, indicating that there is but one gospel.

"Its infinite value is further indicated in the fact that the gospel is called the power of God unto salvation. Not a power, not one of many powers, but *the* power, indicating that it is the *only* power in all the universe of God that is capable of bringing men and women to Christ and salvation.

"We are called upon to believe the facts of the gospel, that is, that Jesus died, was buried and upon the morning of the third day arose from the dead."

"I believe these facts with all my heart," said Betty Loveby inwardly.

"Then we are to obey the commands of the gospel, that is, we are to truly and heartily repent of all of our sins, confess our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

"I have truly and most heartily repented of all of my past sins, in agony and tears, for days and nights. I have now given up all my sinful ways and turned away from them. I am now ready, willing and exceedingly anxious to confess my implicit faith in Christ and be baptized into his blessed name, and am only waiting the very first opportunity," she said.

"All who will believe the facts of the gospel and obey the commands of the gospel can thus, by faith and obedience, appropriate the promise of the gospel, that is, pardon of all past sins, the comforting influence of the Holy Spirit and the bright and glorious hope of heaven, with all that heaven means, unto himself."

"I desire these exceeding great and precious promises above all things," she thought.

"If there is any one present who does believe the facts and is now ready to obey the commands, while we sing the invitation song, we invite you to come forward."

Just as a hymn began to fill the house with its sacred and solemn melody, Betty Loveby arose and went forward. At which the whole congregation rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Many went into tears, and the singers were compelled to

cease their singing until they could get control of their emotions.

To this congregation, with implicit faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his Holy Word and unbounded confidence in God, to be able to reach such a hardened sinner was a positive demonstration of the efficacy of the gospel and its power to save.

At the close of the invitation song, Elder Guide, who was in tears, but had the happy faculty of talking with wonderful power and with most telling effect, despite his tears, said:

"Now, who can dispute the wonderful power of the gospel? This is Betty Loveby, of whom, no doubt, all have heard, for she has been in this city for a number of years. Miss Loveby, I know that I express the sentiment of this entire congregation when I say that we all rejoice exceedingly at your presence at this time. We welcome you most heartily, and will try to do our whole duty in making your stay among us both pleasant and profitable.

"We never ask a congregation whether it will receive a person who comes as a believing penitent, for the reason that it is not theirs to say. It is not the congregation receiving or rejecting, but God. I would not remain with a congregation for an hour if it should thus interfere with the Lord's work and only receive persons who scarcely need repentance."

After she had made a confession of her faith, the minister announced that she insisted upon being baptized the same hour of the night. And, to the honor and praise of the congregation, not one left until the baptism was over. After the benediction the members gathered about her, and all expressed their joy and happiness in having her in their fellowship. They promised her that they would do all in their power to make her stay among them pleasant. The sisters

took her name, street and number and promised to call upon her soon.

Before she left the house she told Elder Guide that if he would kindly give her his number, and would consent to it, she would be pleased to call and see him and his wife the next day at 3 P.M. on what she felt to be, to her, the most important business in the world.

"Most certainly, call. We will be exceedingly anxious to meet you at that time," said the minister.

She went home that night scarcely able to realize where she was. It seemed to her that heaven had come down and kissed the earth that night. She realized for the first time in all her life that "Earth has a joy unknown to heaven, a new-born joy of sins forgiven." She could now sing for the first time:

"When earthly things shall cease to be,
And life's eternal fruits shall bear,
When all the good are gathered home,
I shall be there."

While through sheer exhaustion from the grief and sorrow of the past days she slept some that night, but a good part of the night she lay and let her new-born joy bear its first fruits, that is, cause her to become interested in others.

And, as parents, upon becoming religious themselves, first think of their unsaved children, so, upon becoming religious herself, Betty Loveby's heart first went out for her girls, from the awful sacrifice of whose virtue (let the angels weep!) she had been receiving her loathsome income.

In her present state of mind she would much rather take into her stomach the most poisonous drug known to the medical profession than to take food that had

been purchased with money that represented the price of young girls' virtue.

She could scarcely wait for 3 P.M. of the next day to come. And when it did some she was ringing Elder Guide's door-bell. She was received by the whole family with all possible cordiality and Christian fellowship. As soon as the three were in a room to themseves, she said:

"I don't want to appear hasty, but while I myself have received unspeakable joy I must say that my cup of joy is not yet full. Not but what I have been rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory over the pardon of all my past sins—not that. But, oh, Brother and Sister Guide, my poor girls, my poor girls, my poor girls! Oh, h-o-w c-a-n I s-t-a-n-d it?"

Then she wept and mourned and cried as if her heart would break. The minister and wife both wept with her. And when they were all able to control their emotions, he said:

"My sister, what is their state of mind, and what do you think can be done for them? We, and the whole church, stand in readiness to go anywhere and do anything that will assist in any way, directly or indirectly, in bringing immortal souls to Christ and salvation."

"When I think of those poor girls, where I found them, the pressure that I brought to bear upon them, and the horrible beasts that I employed as instruments to bring them to where they are now, my whole, black, revolting life comes up before me in such a way that I wonder why God did not simply cause the earth to open and swallow me up.

"Of the twenty girls there are not more than three or four but who desire above everything else in this world to get out and away from their present way of living. I say it reverently, but I doubt seriously if

God himself can loathe the lives that they are now living more than they do themselves.

"Now, I have told you all. And the unreasonable request that I want to make of you is for you two to meet me at my apartments to-morrow at 3 P.M. I'll have the girls present, and I want you to receive them, one at a time, in a separate room, and get their several stories from their own lips, and, if possible, help me to meet their demands."

This was an astounding revelation to both. They had always thought that the girls not only went there, but remained there, from choice.

"Yes, indeed," said the minister. "Of course, we will be there."

The next day when they appeared at the apartments they found everything just as Miss Loveby had represented it, and in the course of a very few days they had all arrangements made to leave the place in different directions and locate in as many different places, doing the very things that their parents thought they were doing, and, indeed, very few people ever knew whence they came, and those few who did know were members of the Eighth and Hill church, and for Christ's sake, and for the souls of the girls, would not mention it.

It would be perfectly safe to say that Betty Loveby was now easily the happiest woman on the top of God's green earth, and her girls next. No mother ever thought more of her own daughters, and no daughters ever thought more of their own mothers. And no congregation ever thought more of members than the Eighth and Hill congregation did of these, because of the awful tribulation out of which the congregation had assisted in rescuing them.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE AGREEABLE SURPRISE.

Judge Gross and Emily Church were both strong natures. They have both been travelling toward the same point, but from different angles, until now they are not only within calling distance, but they are within speaking distance.

He is drawing her, and has been from the time that her eyes first beheld him, with a mysterious power that he cannot understand himself. She is also drawing him by the same or similar power, something more than the spirit of sex. They both possess physical, moral and mental strength to a marked degree. If they walk together or separate, they attract attention.

People will naturally, without even thinking or offering an apology or giving any reason for it, take a good, square look at them when they pass, and some have been known to actually stop, turn around and look after them and say to the next person they meet, though he may be a total stranger:

"Isn't that couple the finest specimens of our race that you ever saw?"

If they talk, there is something about their style of conversation that lulls all others into profound silence, makes appreciative auditors of them, and gives them, the speakers, the right of way. If they take positions, there is such manifest depth to all that they say that all others, even those who differ from them, remain the same quiet and appreciative auditors, and are always edified.

But between these two there was a point of difference. This, however, instead of causing enmity between them, as is often the case, seemed to have

had the strange and unusual effect of drawing them closer together and endearing them to each other.

As he had told her that he would look forward to their next meeting with constantly increasing interest, true to his promise, the thought had scarcely been out of his mind for a minute.

"Why should she have such a wonderful power over me?" he would say to himself. "It just seems to me when I see or think of her that things are not apportioned properly. Look at her and then look at Lucy Mugford, for instance. She makes great pretensions, thinks a great deal of herself, and everybody can see that she feels that she is a beautiful woman. But it is debatable whether she could convince another of that fact, if it be a fact.

"With Miss Church one doesn't have to ask, be told, or tell about her beauty. It is not a debatable subject; it is not even a subject of conversation. For, when one sees her, there her beauty is; it needs no defense or explanation—it speaks for itself.

"The poise of her head, shoulders and entire form is most attractive. Then the delicate lines of her long, beautiful throat, as it supports a head, glorified with great sweeps of luxuriant blonde hair, arranged with the taste of an artist, her mouth with a complete absence of coquetry and roguishness—a fountain from which nothing but the sweetest, most tender and helpful of things ever flow—and great blue eyes, as attractive and full of life as the rose—all combined make her a personage simply bewildering. To me she is a dream!

"I cannot help but think of her. I cannot help but desire to be with her. I cannot help but admire and love her. I don't want to help it. It would not be manly and worthy of me to do so. I would think

very disparagingly of myself if I could see nothing in a being like that to admire and love.

"With her my happiness would be complete. And I fear that I would become an easy victim to the doctrine of eternal happiness, or anything else that she believes in."

Miss Church was deeply religious, but to save her life she could not keep similar thoughts concerning him from passing through her mind. She would frequently say to herself:

"I have seen many whom I had every reason to think were very much inclined toward me. Did not their words and actions tell me so? I honored and respected them, but for some reason I did not feel inclined toward them. I did not think that any of them could make me happy, and I did not think that I could make any of them happy.

"But here is a magnificent man, with magnificent abilities and a magnificent character, who tells me by his words and actions that he loves me. I can't get away from him, and I don't want to get away. What does it all mean? I say, without blushing, that I greatly desire to see him right now. I am exceedingly anxious for the time for our next meeting to come, when I can spring the promised pleasant surprise upon him. He will receive it kindly, it will bring us that much closer together, and we will see each other oftener."

The time set for their next meeting has come. All nature seems to endorse the appointment and hopefully look for it to result in the furtherance of the happiness of both. It might have been simply a notion of this couple—it is of most all other young people—that they can think better, talk better and settle more difficult questions if they can drive out into the

country. Especially is this true if they have a proper conveyance.

Old Ben was never more happy than when he was serving "Marse Nevin." When he is doing a thing for him it always goes without saying that it is being done in the very best way of which he is capable. And that means everything, when it comes to preparing driving horses for occasions like this.

He always seemed to rise to the importance of the occasion, as the Judge himself does. And one would think, from the actions of Roanoke, that he, too, by his animal instinct, judges of the importance of the occasion by the preparation that old Ben gives him.

On this special occasion, in order that he might not be in the least handicapped, Ben took the precaution to tie the dogs. For in his judgment the dogs frequently underestimated a great many things. And he knew, from past experience and observation, that it was highly probable that they would in their hilarity over the thought of a possible chance to go somewhere interfere with his work.

Ben had a habit of talking and explaining the meaning of things and the importance of the same to the horse while he was grooming him.

"Ro'nok, old hoss, yo' all mus' jist look fo' de wo'ld lak ah bird. An' yo' mus' ac' jist as good as yo' all looks. Fo' Marse Nevin is goin' on impo'tant bus'ness dis sher time. Yaas, suh, he sho' is. An' ef he fails in bus'ness to-day, we sho' be 'sponsible. And we ain't gwine t' let dem air good fo' nuffin dogs int'fere wid our own bus'ness."

The Judge had gone out to speak to Ben about something, but hearing talk he approached until he was able to overhear the above. And it so amused him that he returned without interrupting him.

When Roanoke and the buggy were presented in

front, they looked as if they were ready to race for ten thousand dollars. And when the Judge entered the buggy, he did not mar the already beautiful picture in the least, but served as an important additional touch.

Still it was a picture unfinished until Miss Church joined them. But when she, as a sweet, healthful, fresh rose, just this minute plucked from the garden, took her place by his side, the picture was then the very acme of perfection.

Roanoke was one of those horses with high life and splendid spirit, but sensible withal. He was not chewing on the bit and prancing around, thereby making it exceedingly difficult to enter the buggy, or liable to trip them when they did make the attempt. Through the instruction of Ben he learned to take it for granted that his master understood exactly what he wanted him to do. So he stood perfectly still and waited for orders.

But his master did not see proper to issue orders until he and Miss Church passed more than casual glances at each other. The sun was shining at just such a degree and at such an angle as to give the most pleasing effect possible.

"Did more beautiful harmony ever exist?" he said to himself as he sat by her side, looking affectionately into her charming face. "I have no desire to be elsewhere."

"I thought that I admired, honored and loved him before," she was saying to herself, "but he has either changed in his personal appearance or we are in more perfect accord to-day than ever before."

He gave Roanoke the word, and they were gone. The weather was neither too cold nor too hot—the air was just right. There was not a cloud to be seen, and the pure, clear sunlight of heaven fitly represented

their devotion to each other, the purity of their desires and the beautiful harmony that pervaded their hearts.

True, they were on their way at this very moment to at least partially settle a point of difference between them, but still, as paradoxical as it may seem, perfect harmony and more than harmony prevailed between them. They were one in the most important sense of that term. To them everything seemed to be beautiful, harmonious and happy.

The rippling, rollicking brook along the roadside, the cattle that dashed afield upon their approach, manifestly not through fear, but to display the fact that they were really enjoying life. And the birds that sang their love songs, as they flitted from branch to branch in the trees, which seemed themselves to clap their hands with joy. Everything was life and peace and joy.

Where was this couple bound for at this time? Where could they go except to the spring? And where could they sit except in the natural seat in the sycamore? Was it not there that they entered upon their present work of settling the only difference between them? And was it not there that they made a degree of progress, and, in all probability, prepared the way to the final settlement of the question? Then why should they think of going elsewhere?

Being seated once more in that seat which was rapidly enshrining itself in both of their hearts, he said:

"My dear Miss Church, I know that I do not want to appear at all hasty, and I do not want you to think me at all unhappy, for I am not. True, there are some things to be settled, things that appear to me to be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to settle.

"But, because you have given me positive assurance that they can be settled satisfactorily and be-

cause of my utmost confidence in you, I do not allow them to mar my present happiness in the least. But now I am more anxious than I can tell to receive that pleasant surprise that you promised for me to-day.

"For you have as much as intimated to me that this pleasant surprise will thoroughly prepare the way for the final settlement of the point of difference between us, that is, my unbelief in the inspiration and authenticity of the Bible. I am now ready for the surprise."

With a charming and gracious look of positive certainty that made it extremely difficult for him to refrain from taking her into his arms and pressing her sweet, red lips to his own, she said sweetly:

"My dear Mr. Gross, you remember that you referred to the crippled young man who was a comparative stranger in this city, and how two certain men and a young lady administered unto his and his partner's wants until the afflicted one became sufficiently convalescent to return to his work?"

"I remember it very well. And I must say that I never heard of anything that impressed me more favorably."

"Do you remember also of having made the remark in this connection that if the churches were engaged in this same kind of work, it would not be a very difficult matter to make a believer of you?"

"I made that statement then, and I make it again to-day. Why, if there were one church to be found in this city which is engaged in so doing, they could not possibly keep me out of it."

"Judge Gross, I want to ask you if you have the least idea who the two gentlemen and the young lady who waited on the crippled man are?"

"I do not, for they never even told the young men their names, and they did not ask the young men who they were."

"Well, I happen to know them all and know them well. And, by the way, they know the young men's names now, and the young men know their names. They have all become lifelong friends and co-workers."

"What, you know them? Miss Church, do you know them?"

"I certainly do. And, as I have said before, I know them well, too."

"Pray, do tell me who they are, for I want to look them up and praise them for their kindly acts and make their acquaintance."

"Would you be surprised if I should tell you that you are already acquainted with at least one of them?"

"It would certainly be a very great surprise to me."

"Would it be a pleasant or an unpleasant surprise to you to learn that you are not only acquainted, but well acquainted, with some of these people whom you have pronounced good and so very good?"

"It would be the most pleasant surprise of my life."

"Well, that is the pleasant surprise that I am so well prepared to spring upon you this moment, in keeping with my promise to you at our last meeting."

"Please do tell me then who they are?"

"I myself am the young lady."

Upon hearing this announcement, he partly sprang to his feet, saying, "What, you don't mean it?"

"Yes, I do mean it. I am the young lady."

His face then took upon it the expression of one in most profound thought—as one gradually becoming conscious of the fact that the light of truth is slowly dawning upon him and driving the darkness out of his heart and life.

All this time he was looking directly into her eyes,

but did not seem to realize it. She realized the situation—the change that his mind was undergoing, and would not have spoken a word to him for the world. For she realized that if that spell should be broken that change in his mind might never be made.

Finally, as if awaking out of a dream, or coming out of a trance, he said:

"Miss Church, to me you are the dearest object on this earth! To me you are everything! You are wisdom, energy, power, goodness, life—all in one! But why should I not have anticipated that you were that precious angel of mercy? For the first time that I ever saw you, you were on a mission of mercy, and you told me then that that was your business. I believed it then, and now I realize it. But the kindest and most merciful thing, perhaps, that you have ever done is your dealings and patience with me."

"My dear, you do certainly have the most charming way of saying things. You have, as yet, received but the remotest inkling of the pleasant surprise that I have for you."

"What, more to follow? Why, I have already received more than I had even anticipated."

"Yes, it is most all to follow yet."

"I declare to you, Miss Church, you are opening the windows of heaven, as it were, and pouring out blessings upon me more than I am able to receive!"

"Yes, you can and must receive it all and receive it now. The two men, to whom you referred, were our minister and one of the elders of the congregation. Besides, quite a number of the other members of the church helped those young men. And the boys appreciated it so much that they are now with us, have become Christians, and are now hard at work and constantly on the alert for opportunities to help in cases similar to their own."

"Oh, I now begin to see. The light that began to dawn upon me at your first announcement is growing brighter as you gradually unfold the pleasant surprise. You mean to tell me that it was the church helping those boys?"

"It was, and you remember what you said about the home on Bond street?"

"I remember that I said that is the work that the church should be doing. And that if the church were doing that kind of work, then, but not until then, would I believe that the church is right."

"That is our home. It was conceived, built and kept up by the Eighth and Hill congregation. It was our minister whom you overheard talking to Tom Douey, and it was our congregation that received Betty Loveby, liberated her girls and found them employment. And this is the character of work in which the congregation is engaged all the time. The reason that we are thus engaged is not simply because we think and know it is right, but because the Bible teaches it."

"Miss Church, I would not have missed this hour for all this world. For it has not only been all that you have promised—a pleasant surprise—but it has been exceedingly, abundantly, more! It has been a perfect revelation to me! I had no idea that there was a church in this city thus engaged. But why do you not publish what you are doing and let the world know it?"

"Judge Gross, the Bible says, 'Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth.' And 'What you do in secret God will reward you openly.'"

"Bless my soul! I am not only surprised, but I am utterly astonished at the wonderful things that you are doing, the spirit in which you are doing your work, and your ability to give Scripture for every

step that you take. You are well aware of the fact that that is exactly what I have always believed in and the spirit in which I have always thought work of that kind should be done. But never before did I know that there was a church in the world that was doing it. In fact, that is the charge that I have always made against the churches."

"I know that, dear, and for that and other reasons I have made an exception of your case. For you made it very clear to me that your salvation depended, in a large measure, upon the information that I have given you this hour. I have not told you in order to advertise the church or to boast of what the church is doing, but as a stepping-stone to the salvation of your soul.

"The Savior said, 'What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' That is to say, your soul, whose eternal destiny is to be fixed by the way in which you live in this world, is of greater value than the combined wealth of the world.

"I am not, but if I should be permitted to make a difference, I know that, of all the souls in the world, I would give yours the preference."

"Now, my dear Miss Church, you have redeemed all your promises to me, and you have done infinitely more than I had anticipated. And now I propose to redeem my promise to you that if the church were doing these things it would not be difficult to make a believer of me. You have shown that at least one church is doing it, and now it is my turn to do something. As I now see it, there is but one single point to be settled (and your pleasant surprise has abundantly prepared the way for that), that is, as to the inspiration and authenticity of the Christian Scriptures. For, of course, you would not ask me

to, and, indeed, I could not accept them without first thoroughly and most critically examining them."

"Certainly not, and that is exactly why I told you at the beginning that the point of difference could not be settled in an hour or even a day. I know that you never could simply take anything for granted, especially as important a matter as this.

"And the reason that I have been so happy and so confident all the time is because I know that you are absolutely honest, and that you desire nothing, and will be satisfied with nothing, but the truth. I have positive assurance, from the Word of God, that any one will believe and know who will honestly investigate the Word.

"Jesus said, 'If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself.' "

"Miss Church, by the time we shall meet again I promise you that I will have investigated the Word of God. And I will make an honest effort to be able to spring as great and as pleasant a surprise upon you then, and possibly before, as you have upon me this time."

They both returned, if possible, more happy than when they left. For both realized that they had made material advancement toward the solution of the vexed problem as to what a man will give in exchange for his soul.

CHAPTER XX.

THE "HIPPO CLUB."

Always, when we think of a club, we have in mind an organization that has been instituted for some specific purpose; for social pleasures, literary improve-

ment, to propagate some important theory, or to promote some important enterprise.

We have learned to think of the members as thoroughly officered and ready for business. We see them in their meetings proceeding in a perfectly orderly way to arise, one after another, in response to their names, according to the previously arranged plan, and give the club the result of their close study and vigorous efforts since their names were placed upon the programme. Thus the speakers have added materially to their own store of knowledge, and the entire club has been edified.

But not so with the so-called "Hippo Club." It has no organization at all, and never did have. And hence it never had any programmes. No one was ever called upon to inform himself on some special topic and give the club the benefit of his acquired information.

Why it should be called a club no one seems to have any idea. And the name of the club came from the same realm of uncertainties. The place of meeting was the large barn of an office, occupied by old "Doc" Spondug, who had come to this city several years before, could not pass the required medical examination, but was trying, in violation of the law, to practise anyway.

The walls of this office were large, barren and dingy looking. In one corner was a grimy, nasty-looking old out-of-date desk that he had purchased from some second-hand store when he first came to Bidwell. In this miserable old desk were a number of bottles of different sizes, some of which contained from a few drops to a half-bottle full of medicine, but the most of them were empty.

Scattered around the room were many old chairs, every one of which had been broken down many times

and as often nailed together again, and supported by ill-shaped pieces of boards and planks. In addition they had a half dozen or a dozen large, old-fashioned, open-topped cuspidors, filled with ashes, setting around promiscuously all over the room.

This was the home of the "Hippo Club." What does the reader think of it? If you ever happen to be passing through the city of Bidwell, you might make it a point to stop off and visit the "Hippo."

The meetings are all informal, and begin when old Doc "lights up" (there were no electric lights in the old office) and continue until old Doc becomes tired and sleepy and announces that he has to go home and go to bed.

Among the prominent, influential and most regular attendants I might mention Mit Sniggle, Nat Gulper, "Codfish" Winky, Gan Loper, "Soapy" Bumps and many others. These, however, are the leading lights.

Of course, I do not mean in any way to disparage old Doc. For it is always understood that he is the high muck-a-muck. Or, to change the figure, he is the full orb around which all the lesser lights revolve.

Old Doc posed as the leading infidel of all that part of the city, and, as he had at some time in his life read a few articles in the newspapers on science, he claimed to have gone very deep into the subject.

And, having committed to memory a few scientific terms, while sitting in the club he would draw one of the large cuspidors close to him, take a wad of strong tobacco as large as a walnut into his mouth, cross his feet over the corner of his old desk, then juggle with his scientific terms until the crowd would sit and listen with open ears, eyes and mouths in utter astonishment at the wisdom of the man.

In connection with his juggling with his scientific

terms, he would always make it a point to mention, as a fact, that he had met and silenced this preacher, that teacher and that scientist until, in discussing him in his absence, the boys would say:

"Jist to look at him no one would take him fur a smart man. But jist let one of them college fellers tackle him onct. Then you may look out—the fur is goin' to fly. They all know him. Not that he has bin afoul of 'em all, but them that he has skinned alive tells the other fellers."

He also claims to be a great Scriptorian—says that he has read the Bible one hundred times. And between squirts of almost blood-red amber, he would pour forth what he called quotations from the Scriptures. Of course, the boys could not tell whether it was Scriptures, Shakespere or Dickens, for they had never read any of them. Their confidence in old Doc was such that he could say anything, and they would take it for granted that it was just as he said.

And by their usual style of reasoning they would conclude and say: "He is so well posted on the Bible that all the preachers are afraid of him. Not one can be found who will meet him in public discussion."

He deceived his crowd completely, but himself more completely, as it were. At first he knew that he was not well informed, but afterwards he asserted his knowledge so often that his audience not only believed, but they were such ardent admirers on account of his deceit that he finally came to believe it himself.

And just as soon as he came to this conclusion he became somewhat overbearing, attacking the ministers whenever and wherever he met them. Most of the ministers, knowing his ignorant and rough, uncouth way of thinking, would simply let him talk.

He, like his admirers, would jump at the conclusion

that the ministers were afraid of him because they refused to talk with him. And in referring to it, when talking to the club about it, he would call it another "back-down."

So many "back-downs" gave him such confidence in himself that, thinking the importance of the subject justified it, his zeal for once caused him to stand up and address the club.

"Boys," said he, "I don't propose to mince matters any longer. If you will all agree to be present to-morrow (Sunday) night, I propose to beard the lion in his den. I propose to carry the battle into the enemy's camp. Meet me at the Eighth and Hill street church and watch me attack and expose old Elder Guide, as they call him, in his own pulpit and in the presence of his own admiring members. They will not be so ardent in their admiration of him, however, when I get through with him. He will need some one to guide him."

"I'll tell you, fellers, old Doc is all right. He ain't afeard of nuthin'," said Sniggle.

"You bet he ain't," said Winky. "And we will all be thar, too, and don't you furgit it. It will be better'n a circus. Doc, we want you to do your dirtiest."

"Boys, I'll take it off in flakes as broad as your hand. I'll skin him and hang his old hide out on the fence to dry."

"Haw! haw! haw!" all laughing at his striking figures of speech.

The time came, and the club was there *en masse* to plume and feather their champion as soon as his easy walk-over was accomplished. Old Doc was over-corpulent—he was fat, low-browed, a beastly looking being, and his crowd, as one would naturally suppose, were generally narrow between the eyes, with weak

mouths, and some of them scarcely had any chins at all.

In their extreme weakness they had so much confidence in their old leader that they were as anxious for him to get at it as a crowd at the race tracks for the races to begin. He sat and looked as pompous and dignified as he knew how, with his eyes fixed upon the pulpit where the minister was soon to appear with the intensity of the hunter, gun in hand, watching a point where he is certain that big game is soon to appear. His admirers scarcely took their eyes off him, but watched him admiringly and, at the same time, exulting over the victory that he was soon to win.

They were saying to themselves, "Oh, but I would hate to be in that feller's shoes. When old Doc gets through with him, his hide will not hold shucks. He will look like a chawed cat. Wonder what his people will think of their preacher?" At the thought of the prospective scene, they could not help but chuckle a little to save their lives.

By and by the tall, not extravagantly, but neatly dressed iron-gray gentleman appeared in the pulpit. A more refined, cultured and pure-looking man never appeared before an audience.

After the usual introduction he entered upon his sermon proper. Among other things he incidentally made use of the word "hell," when this monstrous thing in human form bawled out, "I don't believe there is any such a place as hell." And a distinct snicker was heard all over the auditorium, emanating from his own crowd.

One of them, not any more enthusiastic than the rest, but just a little more daring, was heard to say, "Gol, but that was a centre shot. One or two more like that and he will go down."

While the loud, untrained voice at this time was to the audience like a thunder-clap from a clear sky, Elder Guide, known far and near for being calm under all circumstances, and equal to any situation, was not at all shocked, but looked around calmly until he discovered the speaker, when he said in the same kind, even tone of voice:

"I notice that you are becoming quite gray, so you will soon find out," and went right on with his discourse exactly as if nothing had happened.

The boys' snicker ceased, and they looked in blank astonishment to think that old Doc had finally met one kind, benevolent-looking minister who was not afraid of him, and had, with wonderful tact, caught the point of his first thrust and not only turned it aside, but turned it back upon old Doc himself in such a way that it made him wince.

They had thought (simply because old Doc had told them so) that all of the ministers were afraid of him and utterly helpless when in his power. They had never thought of there being an exception.

Doc turned red with anger, and it was the audience's time to smile, which they did in spite of themselves.

A little later in his discourse he remarked that "Paul said" something. And the old infidel, fired by his first failure, fairly roared out this time, "But I don't believe what old Paul said."

Without raising or lowering his voice, the minister parenthetically, as it were, replied, "If you will not believe what Paul says, you are not very apt to believe what I say," and went right on with his discourse again as if no one had even attempted to interrupt him.

The members of the "Hippo" began to wish that they had not come, and Doc became insanely mad,

but was afraid to make another sally while the Elder was talking, for he knew that he was very likely to be let down harder every time.

When Elder Guide had finished his powerful and eminently Scriptural discourse, in spite of Doc's attempted interruptions, and had closed with just as wonderful an exhortation, the old infidel, knowing that the boys were all thinking that he had found one man of whom he was afraid, and one who, in their own judgment, was too much for him, was now determined to regain his lost ground and drive his opponent home, so to speak. So he arose and said:

"Elder Guide, did I understand you to say that hell is literally fire and brimstone?"

"I don't know what you understood me to say," said the minister.

"Well, didn't this audience understand you to say that?"

"No, sir."

"I understood you to say that, and I am a part of this audience."

"Yes, indeed, and a very small part, too. Let us look to the Lord and be dismissed."

He pronounced the benediction in exactly the same way and in the same tone that he would have done if Doc and his gang had not been there.

His wonderful poise while under public fire astonished the elders and older members. They knew that he was a scholar and determined, but never thought once of his being so ready in the face of an unexpected opponent.

And we must not charge it against the Christianity of the younger members if they did smile just a little when they looked over and saw old Doc's confusion. Also, we are not to think the case of the non-members present hopelessly difficult even if they did laugh out-

right during the pronunciation of the benediction. For the provocation to laugh was so sudden and rare that it was exceedingly difficult, if not utterly impossible, to withstand it.

Almost by the time that the preacher let his voice fall Doc was up in front to have it out with him. The audience, seeing him rush forward, instead of retiring, resumed their seats.

Doc's friends would have gone forward, too, if they had had as much confidence in their leader as they had when they came. But thus far they had heard nothing to strengthen their confidence in him, but the reverse.

They thought that if he made no better progress than he had already made, it would be sufficiently trying on their nerves where they were.

"I want you to understand, sir," said Doc, "that I am no plaything. I am no tyro. I am a scientist. For years I have made a close, systematic study of the various sciences."

Some of the members thought, "Well, if he is a scientist, he may prove too much for Elder Guide yet." And they were just a little apprehensive.

"Will you," said the minister, "kindly give me the names of some of the authors whose scientific works you have investigated?"

"Let me see—why—ah—oh—ah—why, I can't think of all of them."

"You need not mention all of them. If you will kindly mention just a few, it will answer every purpose."

"Upon my word! To save my life"— snap went his finger. "Now, I have it—no, I haven't, either. I thought sure that I had the name of a little complete arrangement that I used to study, but it went from me just like that," snapping his fingers again.

"If you will name a single author, it will suffice for the present, inasmuch as your usually splendid memory seems to fail you at this time."

"No, sir, I cannot recall a single author."

"You don't mean to tell me that you have been a close student of scientific works for all these years and can't think of the name of a single author, do you?"

"Not one, I am ashamed to say."

Again the audience, seeing his confusion, brought about by the most gentle forbearance that they had ever seen, could not help manifesting, unconsciously and unintentionally, not only their knowledge of the fact, but their satisfaction as well. And Doc could not help but see it.

"I cannot account for my forgetting them all in any other way than from the fact that, for the last few years, I dropped the immediate study of the sciences and have devoted my time exclusively to the study of the Scriptures. And I tell you now, if I don't know the Scriptures, no one does," said the redoubtable Doc.

"I have read the Bible through a hundred times. And I am now prepared to prove, by both internal and external evidence, that the Scriptures are all false —nothing but a bundle of old musty manuscripts, full of contradictions, inconsistencies and incongruities."

One of the boys said, "Jist listen to that, will you? That has the right ring. It sounds like it does down at the office. He seems to be gettin' himself together now. Maybe he is agoin' to win out after all."

"He will, and don't you furgit it," said Mit Sniggle. "Jist look at them eyes of his'n and, while you are at it, jist take a squint at them double fists. He

had ought to a commenced on the Scripter in the first place, and then it would have bin all over now, and we would be on our way home howling over our victory."

For a few brief moments they forgot all about what had passed, and the thought of his finally coming out gloriously victorious took complete possession of them for the time being.

But Elder Guide, nothing daunted by his boasted arrogance, said as quietly as before:

"Do you say that you have read the Bible through one hundred times?"

"That is exactly what I said, sir."

"Then you must be by far the best informed man in the Scriptures that it has ever been my good fortune to meet."

"No doubt of it, sir, no doubt of it. For I presume that it would be somewhat difficult to find a church member who has read it straight through even once."

"I know, as a matter of fact, that comparatively few church members have done even that much. But inasmuch as you are the best Scriptorian whom this congregation has ever seen, will you be so kind as to quote the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis?"

After a long, oppressive pause, Doc's face became crimson, his eyes fell, and both hands went into his pockets, while his boys, who had been leaning forward with their elbows on the backs of the seat in front of them, fell back into their own seats simultaneously, and with such a crash that it caused almost the entire audience to turn and look that way.

"I can't quote it just now, and there is no use for me to try," said Doc.

"Quote a few verses from the first Psalm, then."

"I cannot."

"The twenty-third Psalm."

"I can't."

"The ninety-first."

"I can't."

"The first verse of the first chapter of the New Testament."

"I can't."

"Just one single verse in all the Bible."

"I can't."

"Do you mean to tell me that you have read the Bible through one hundred times, and still you are unable to quote a single verse in all the book?"

"I told you that I cannot, and what do you keep on asking the question for?"

"I simply wanted to be certain that I thoroughly understood you, that was all."

"I have been on the defensive thus far, and I am so bothered that I can scarcely think of anything. I now want to place you on the defensive for a while, and I want to show this audience that you can be bothered, too. I will show that your whole business is wrong.

"Is it not a fact that you pose here as a teacher of the way of salvation for the souls of men?"

"I do claim to be teaching men the right way for the salvation of their souls as well as my own," said the minister.

"But how do you know that you have a soul? Did you ever see a soul?"

"No, sir, I never saw a soul in all my life."

"Did you ever hear a soul?"

"I never did."

"Did you ever taste a soul?"

"I never tasted a soul."

"Did you ever smell a soul?"

"Never."

"Did you ever feel a soul?"

"Yes, sir, I have felt a soul. I have felt my own soul. For some reason, I feel that I am superior to the horse that I drive, the dog that follows me about, or the cat lying on the door-mat. Yes, I think that I have felt a soul."

"Now, can you not see at a glance that you are mistaken in all this? For here you have five witnesses present, and when they are all called upon to testify concerning a matter in which they are all interested, four of them say that they know absolutely nothing, while one says that it does. To accept your theory of religion, or the existence of the soul, you have to accept the testimony of one single witness and reject the testimony of four, whose testimony, upon any other subject, will be taken just as readily as this one."

"But, Doctor, do you not pose as a man whose business it is to relieve pain?"

"That is my business, sir. And I feel that I and men of my profession are making a great deal better showing than the ministers are at theirs."

"How do you know that there is such a thing as pain? Did you ever see a pain?"

"I never did."

"Did you ever taste a pain?"

"I never tasted a pain."

"Did you ever hear a pain?"

"No, sir, I did not."

"Did you ever smell a pain?"

"It is impossible."

"Then did you ever feel a pain?"

"Most certainly, I have."

"How can you intelligently deny the existence of the human soul on the ground that the testimony of four witnesses present outweigh one in the affirmative, and then affirm the existence of pain in the

human body when the testimony of the same four witnesses have to be rejected and the testimony of only one is to be accepted? Do you reject the existence of the soul because it is my business and accept the theory of pain because it is your own business?"

By the time that the minister reached his final question Doc was not only insanely mad, but his wrath was at ocean fury. And one of the boys, seeing that it was about to burst forth and spend itself upon the entire congregation, or sympathizing with Elder Guide, called:

"Aw, come on, Doc, you old fool; you have made asses of the whole kit of us!"

They then all left the room chagrined, shamefaced and old Doc terribly crestfallen.

"Shall we have them arrested for disturbing public worship?" inquired one man, who was not a member of the church."

"Oh, no! no! no!" said Elder Guide, "for they know not what they do."

Judge Gross, who was now studying the Bible by day and by night to see whether it was true, was present that evening, and said later, "That was the shrewdest management of a difficult situation that I ever witnessed."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE NEXT EVENING.

The next evening all who had been in the habit of attending the "Hippo" were present, and many others who had heard of the episode at the church came past to see old Doc and learn how he was feeling about it. Although the office was lighted up, Doc was

out to see a patient (so he explained when he returned), and did not get in for an hour after the members and others had assembled. And while they were waiting, why, of course, they had to "kill" time talking. And in order to talk they necessarily had to have something to talk about, although it must be confessed that an infidel club of the Doc Spondug type can come just about as near putting in all their time talking about nothing as any institution on earth —on the Bible principle that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." At any rate, there was but one thing that they could talk about this evening, and that was Doc's encounter with the preacher.

"I'll tell you what, fellers," said Soapy Bumps. "By Ned! I was hot under the collar last night! I felt jist like I could lick all the sky-pilots that could git around me. And if it hadn't a bin jist whar it was, I'd a talked kinder sassy-like to 'um anyway. But I have bin stud'n ever since, try'n to make out exactly what I was mad about. And, to save my life, I can't think uv but one thing, that is, that old Doc was one uv our crowd, and our leader, and we didn't want to see him beat and his doctrines knocked into a cocked hat. No nicer man than Elder Guide ever lived, and everybody knows it. I know it, and you fellers know it, and even old Doc knows it, but I don't 'spose he'd admit it. Think how nice he was dressed, how clean he looked, how good he looked, what a kind voice he had! I jist could not help but notice the difference in the two men in personal appearance and the way they controlled their words and tempers. You all thought jist as I did, and, boys, you can't deny it. You know thar wus as much difference between them as thar is between day and night, and all in favor of Elder Guide."

"By George! that's so," said Winky. "They made

me think uv the story uv 'The Lion and the Lamb'—Doc the lion and Elder Guide the lamb."

"I'll be doggoned if they didn't make me think uv rough and ready—Doc the rough and Elder Guide the ready," said Nat Gulper.

"I have bin think'n a great deal of late," said Loper, "not only since, but before the confab with the parson. And the more I think, the more I become disgusted with myself and every blamed one of you, too. We are all a disgrace to ourselves and this beautiful city."

"I think the churches air wrong in doctr'n," said Sniggles, interrupting while Loper was talking.

"Fellers," continued Loper, "turn around now, and jist you all take a squint at Mit Sniggles there. Git a focus on him if you can. Take a look at the shape of that head. It looks like a football with the wind kicked out'n it. Look at them eyes. They look like burnt holes in a blanket. Not a particle of expression in them. Look at that nose. It looks like it had bin mashed flat fur bein' in other people's bus'ness. Look at that chin stuck away up under his throat—jist no chin at all. And that mouth stickin' away out in front of his face so far that he could bite a pumpkin through the crack of the fence and be no trouble to him at all. I'll swear, if I should start out and meet a half dozen like him at onct, I would come in a full-fledged Darwinite."

"I can give a description o' you better'n your'n is o' me," said Sniggles.

"No doubt of it, Mit, but you 'butted in' when I was talkin', and it kinder riled me like, and I was jist tellin' you what I thought o' you. I insist upon it that my description of Mit is correct. Anybody can look at him and tell in a minute that he has no sense."

Mit was just about to get on his feet in self-

defence when Loper fixed things by saying: "But he is a fair sample of this whole crowd. Just look at the personnel. (I wus lookin' in the unabridged dictionary the other day and happened to run onto this word. And I swore then, if I ever had an opportunity to git it off on this here crowd, I wus goin' to do it.)

"Honest, don't we look like a lot of baboons? I would be ashamed to be caught on the street with Sniggles." Mit got halfway up this time, but Loper proceeded to make things satisfactory once more by saying: "And I would be ashamed for him to be caught on the street with me. I am ashamed of this whole crowd, and I hope that the whole crowd is ashamed of me. We all jist barely have sense enough to come in out of the rain, if it is raining hard enough, or maybe dropping hailstones large enough to crack our heads.

"And we jist have sense enough to go to the table and eat after it is prepared for us, provided we are right hungry and can scent the grub. Yet we set around here on these old patched up chairs in this old dirty hole of an office in company with as swearin', foul-mouthed an old wild-hog as ever lived, and squirt our tobacker juice in the direction of these old slop-buckets, hit or miss, and call ourselves critics!"

When he said this, he placed both hands over his eyes and turned his back to the crowd, he was so ashamed.

"We criticise the life, teaching and practice of Elder Guide! Think of it! I'll tell you what we ought to do. We ought to convert this club into a 'Mutual Kickin' Society,' meet here every night and kick each other by the hour," he said.

"Old Doc made us believe that he was a smart man —a scientist and Scriptorian," he said, turning around. "We believed him, and why? The only answer to

the question is because we have no sense. We don't know nuthin'. What was he in the hands of Elder Guide? Jist what a mouse is in the paws of a cat. Doc was a mere toy or plaything. And here we are, jist a lot of ciphers with the rims knocked off. Talk about criticising such a man as that!

"I'll tell you what I propose to do. I propose to stay right under Elder Guide's instructions until I at least know enough to keep out of the fire."

"That's our firm resolution," said all of the others except Mit Sniggles.

"I think," said he, "Doc is a mighty smart man, and I think the churches are wrong in doctr'n."

"Jist look at Sniggles," said Loper, "and hear what he says. He talks jist as ignorant as he looks. And yet I expect that we are all, Doc not excepted, exactly alike. Sniggles says that he thinks that the churches are all wrong in doctr'n. There is not a suckin' baby in the United States but what could think that as well, if you could keep it from its bottle long enough. And yet what he has said is just as deep a thing as has been said in this office for a year."

"Here comes Doc; let's see how he feels about it!"

"Hello! Doc, how are you comin'?" said Winky.

"How are you stackin' up, Doc?" said Gulper.

"How's Elder Guide, Doc?" said Loper.

But not a word from Doc until he had set his case down, lit his pipe and got his feet across the corner of his old desk. He then faced them and looked at them with a studied air for a long time. Finally he broke the stillness (for they were all waiting in breathless silence) by saying:

"Boys, do you know how I felt up there in front of that great audience, talking to that man?"

"No, Doc, how did you feel?" said one.

"Well, sir, I felt like a fool!"

"I thought," said Loper, "when he got through with you that you must 'a' felt very much like a certain man said that he did when he got religion."

"How was that, Loper?" Doc inquired.

"A man had asked him to tell him, in his own language, jist how he felt when he got religion. 'Well, sir,' said he, 'I felt jist like a chawed cat.'"

"That's it, that's it," said Doc. "You couldn't have described my feelings any better. Do you know that I think that is one of the smartest men I ever heard talk?"

"That is jist what all of us, except Sniggles, decided jist before you came in," said Loper.

"You are right, boys, and I am going to tell you another thing. I want some of the information that he has stored away in that magnificent brain."

"That's our decision, too," said the boys.

"Of course," Doc continued, "he said but very little to me, but what he did say and the way he said it would give a man an idea. Then that sermon! Believer or unbeliever, one couldn't help but wonder at the facts, figures, names, dates and the world of information that he gave us in forty-five minutes! I propose to apologize to him not only for my misconduct last night, but for my dense ignorance as well.

"I remember when I was a boy there was one very much of a man. He made it a point to whip men, apparently for pastime, if they crossed him in the least. And whenever he said he was going to lick a man, well, boys, that fellow had just as well pack up and prepare for the occasion, for this Joe Dilly always made his word good. So everybody was afraid of him. And, as a result, he swelled up and strutted around there as if he owned the earth, and all others were his hired hands, whom he had employed to run the earth for him.

"But finally, on an election day, when all the voters in the precinct were out—in those times they stayed out all day; business was not so pressing then as to cause men to rush to the polls and then rush back.

"Tommy Buck, on one of those election days, said something that Joe Dilly grossly misconstrued into something that hurt his vanity. Now, Joe weighed just two hundred pounds and looked for all the world like the athletic picture that we see in the papers and had any amount of practice in fighting. He was just thirty years of age. Tommy Buck was forty-five, weighed one hundred and forty pounds, and had never had so much as a quarrel that I ever heard of.

"Joe's idea was simply to slap Tommy down with his open hand, stick one more feather in his already well-decorated cap, and go on about his business.

"But when he slapped at him, you never saw a cat any quicker to spring out of the way of his blow. And no cat, with eyes flashing fire, hair from the tip of its tail to the point of its nose all turned the wrong way, body bowed, claws distended and teeth showing, looked any more vicious than did Tommy Buck. When Joe struck at him the second time, it was with all his strength, with his powerful, big fist clenched this time like a vice. Tommy warded his blow off, then, putting forth every particle of his own strength, he flew into his face, landed under his chin the awfullest blow that I ever saw given, which laid Joe flat on his back. And if he had not been the most powerful man in the world, he would have stayed there. But, as it was, he no sooner hit the ground than he was on his feet again, now looking, for all the world, like a tremendously enraged bull when, with a great roar, he lunged at his opponent like a raging storm that would seem to sweep everything before it. But Tommy again, with the same precision, laid him flat. This

was repeated twice, by which time he was so far disabled that Tommy could get onto him with his feet, when he broke several of his ribs, actually stamped his teeth down his throat and continued to stamp him until he ceased to offer any further resistance any more than if it had been his dead body lying there. In fact, we thought he was dead. And, boys, do you know that Joe Dilly never fought again? It made a man of him.

"Now, I have told this story at some length because it so strikingly illustrates my own condition. I have been thoroughly whipped, and that by a man who never had a debate in his life, and was not expecting any at this time. I jumped on him unawares. I'll never fight again. Henceforth I am a learner."

"Doc," said Loper, "now you begin to talk like a man sane and in his right mind. The fact is that he not only walloped you, but through you he walloped the whole 'kit' of us. And henceforth, as you say, we are all learners."

CHAPTER XXII.

OLD DOC'S APOLOGY.

The next day (Tuesday), "blue" Monday having passed, Elder Guide was in his study alone. In his prayer there in his study, where none could hear his silent, secret prayer but God, he had prayed, "We are promised in thy Holy Word that if 'any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.' We are nothing but poor, weak, fallible worms of the dust. Without thy divine assistance we can do absolutely nothing—we cannot speak one word, we cannot walk one step, we

cannot draw one breath. We are entirely dependent upon thee for all that we have, and are, and ever expect to be in this world, and in the world to come.

"Therefore, with great humility of heart and deep solemnity of purpose, we implore thee to give us wisdom in the discussion of this important text, 'As much as lieth within thee, live peaceably with all men.' There is so much enmity in the world not simply against us, our teachings and practices, O Lord, but against the truth—against God—that it is impossible to live peaceably with all men.

"But give us wisdom that we may so let our light shine as to so thoroughly illuminate the pathway in which thou wouldst have all men tread, that all with whom we may be associated from day to day, and from time to time, may be left wholly without excuse. Hear us, in mercy, answer us in peace and finally save us in heaven, for Christ's sake, Amen."

While he felt greatly strengthened for the task before him, still there was an unexplainable heaviness about him. He could not get old Doc Spondug out of his mind. The rough exterior of the man was constantly before his mind, and he could hear the very tone of his voice. He could see his first defiant attitude, then his cowering. He said to himself:

"What a perverse idea of life that man has! How utterly he is failing to meet and discharge the duties and responsibilities that God has placed upon him! He is falling so far short of the pleasure, the joy and happiness that the Lord has provided for him! Poor man, he is unhappy and condemned in this world, and he will be unhappy and eternally lost in the world to come. Oh, how my heart goes out to him! I do wonder if what I said to him the other night hardened him, and made him more set in his ways? I do hope differently. Still, it was the best I could

do. God forgive me if I said the wrong things! I do want to see that man so much, for there appeared to have been many others who were under his influence, and if I could only do him good I might be able, through him, to do those under his influence good."

These thoughts were flitting through his mind right while he was preparing his discourse upon the above text, "As much as lieth within you, live peaceably with all men," and he could not keep them out of his mind.

Presently he heard rather heavy footfalls coming up the stairway, whose heaviness was somewhat overcome by a manifest effort to do so. A rap on the door and, almost at the same time, a deep voice which, it seemed to him, he had heard before said:

"May I come in?"

"Come in," said the minister.

And behold! Old Doc Spondug, looking somewhat chastened, but wearing a pleasant smile, presented himself.

"Elder Guide, I presume that you know me?" he said, in altogether a different tone from that of Sunday evening.

"Indeed, I do," and, taking him by the hand and laying his other hand upon Doc's shoulder, said:

"And I want to say to you, my dear sir, that an angel from heaven would be no more welcome here this morning than you are. For I have suffered, grieved and prayed not a little over you since our conversation Sunday night. In fact, I can't recall a single moment when you and those with you have been out of my mind.

"When I have been engaged in conversation, and even while preparing this discourse, you were constantly in my mind. I have wondered if I said the

right thing Sunday night. I have thought of the bare possibility of what I said driving you further away. What I said was not premeditated. I said it simply because I did not know what else to say. And when you asked to be admitted into this room, that very minute I was desiring to see you more than any other man on this earth. I cannot express my joy and happiness at your coming. Kindly take this comfortable chair and remember, too, that studies do not count now, for this is sacredly and solemnly set apart for our conversation."

"What!" said Doc, as he took the proffered seat and looked steadily into the kindly brown eyes of the minister, apparently slightly floating in tears, thereby demonstrating the fact that his whole heart and soul were in what he had been saying, "What! you interested in me, the pure saintly man that you are and the cruel beast of a man that I have been! No, that cannot be!"

"O Doctor, sometimes I feel that before God you might be nearer the kingdom than myself. It is with such fear and trembling that I am feebly trying to work out my salvation that I cannot, for a single moment, think of myself as superior to any man. It is the grace of God only that lifts one man above another in proportion to the degree of grace received by each."

"Elder Guide, I came here for the sole purpose of apologizing to you for my rudeness in interrupting you while delivering your discourse, which represented so much hard work and such painstaking study. And for disturbing your public worship. Do you know that your replies were so ingenious, brief and yet so overwhelming that, for the moment, I could think of nothing to do but to get mad? At the time, do you know that I thought your replies the most cutting,

ironical and sarcastic that I had ever heard, and supposed at the time that you would go away boasting and gloating over your victory.

"But even then my better judgment told me that you were not that kind of a man. Being insanely mad accounts for such gross reasoning on my part. I have thought and thought a great deal over your replies, and instead of appearing sarcastic and ironical I have come to the conclusion that they were the very mildest way in which you could have possibly met me on my own ground.

"You made no argument, you made no accusations. You simply asked me a few of the most fair and reasonable questions that could possibly be framed concerning my own position. No, Elder Guide, you manifested the sweetest, most gentle and most conciliatory spirit that a man could possibly manifest under such trying circumstances. As I think of it now, it would not have been at all out of the way for you to have called an officer and fired me out at the time.

"No, indeed; instead of driving us farther away, we already being about as far away as it was possible for us to get, your kindness and gentle spirit has drawn us infinitely nearer—not only myself and those present with me Sunday night, but all who meet with us at the club. We have talked the matter all over among ourselves, and we all feel exactly the same way toward you. Besides, I want to say to you for myself and on behalf of those whom I represent that henceforth we will not throw a straw in your way, or in the way of your work. And we will all promise to hear everything that you say in a public way from now on that it is possible for us to hear and to listen respectfully."

"Doctor, you have lifted a tremendous load from

my heart! I would not have missed your coming for the world! By virtue of your visit and our conversation I will be able to do more effective work in the future. Also, if you don't mind, I would be pleased to meet you all at your club some time in the near future."

"With all my heart, on behalf of the club, I extend you a most cordial invitation. No man in all the city of Bidwell will be more welcome."

The very same day a dray was seen to drive up in front of the old office and stop. In a few minutes it was seen driving away with the entire outfit of furniture, desk, chairs, spittoons and all. A little later the same dray returned with a nice desk, chair and other chairs, a large rug and some choice pictures. The entire place was completely transformed.

But the transformation in the members' style of dress, conversation and otherwise was even greater than in the appearance of the room. After that, Elder Guide was a frequent caller at the club. And no man was ever received with more manifest appreciation. Many of them were heard to say, "His coming and going is like the passing of a beautiful ray of sunshine!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

NEVIN TALKS WITH HIS PARENTS.

"Son," said the mother, as they sat around the tablespread at the evening meal, "for quite a while you have not appeared altogether like yourself. There seems to be something troubling you, and has been ever since the Jenkins' case. But for the last few days you have been as cheerful, light hearted and happy as I ever saw you. What has been the trouble, and what is the cause of your light-heartedness now?"

"Bless your heart, mother! We can't keep anything from mother, can we? I thought I was keeping you and father both in the dark all of this time."

"Oh, no, indeed, son, never think that. Your father and I have had many talks about your apparent mental trouble."

"Yes, son," said the father, "and we know that it was something aside from your business, too, for the reason that you are not the kind to worry over business. Besides, you have been successful in everything in a business way that you have undertaken. We have felt all the time that just as soon as you thought proper you would make all known. And, as everything now seems to be clear to you, we thought possibly you might be ready to report."

"Yes, you are right. I have been troubled in more than one way. I have had two problems to solve which were exceedingly difficult—those I have been troubling over. I have solved them both—that is why I am rejoicing now. I believe that it is due to you both to know the problems and my solutions of the same."

"Certainly," said the Governor. "We never kept anything from you, and we never want the time to come that our only son will keep anything from us."

"I shall mention the second problem first. You know, father, that we have always been looked upon as unbelievers. In fact, we claimed to be and thought we were because of our attitude toward the churches. Now, is that not true?"

"It is."

"We maintained our attitude toward the churches because of the weaknesses, frailties, dishonesty and hypocrisy of the church members. Their failures caused us to lose confidence in humanity, which caused us a great deal of unhappiness. We could

not think as much of people as we would like to. I have heard you say that you despised everybody except your own family."

"That's true, son. It may have been wrong in me. Anyway, my life has always lacked something to make my happiness complete. Despising people made me very unhappy at times, and it might be that if there is anything that would make me think more of people, it would solve my difficulty and complete my happiness."

"Father, it seems that it never occurred to either of us that the things that we objected to so vigorously and on account of which we would have nothing to do with the churches do not constitute Christianity at all. That the few faithful members deplore the hypocrisies in the churches as much as we do. And that the Bible condemns it as vigorously as we do.

"Now, the solution of the second problem submitted to me is a virtual solution of the first. Or, rather, the solution of the first depends upon the solution of the second.

"The second problem, father: Are the Scriptures authentic, and did they come by inspiration? I have been studying them day and night, and my final conclusion is that if they are not true, authentic and inspired, then there is nothing in the universe that is true—that can be proven."

The Governor had been so pronounced in his unbelief for so long that his son was the only man in the universe to whom he would have granted the privilege of saying so much. He knew that it was not his son's disposition to take anything for granted, and that he was thoroughly capable of investigating any subject. He knew that he himself had not investigated the Scriptures, and that if his son had, and had concluded that they were authentic, then there

must be some very strong, apparent reason for it, otherwise he never would have so concluded. And he, in his own heart, was resolving, right while his son was talking, to investigate them himself, as old as he was.

"Yes, father, by reading the Scriptures closely I find that they condemn the very things—all the things that you have always condemned. They condemn them in stronger terms than you or I ever did. Again, strange to say, the very principles that you have always advocated are advocated by the Bible.

"For instance, you have always been in favor of helping the widows, orphans, the poor and needy. The Bible says: 'Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and keep yourself unspotted from the world.' So you see that the very principle that you have always been in favor of is the pure and undefiled religion taught in the Scriptures.

"Again, you have always been heart and hand, soul and body, life and spirit against bragging, boasting and gloating over what one is doing.

"The Bible says, 'Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth.' So, with reference to everything that is right. It is all taught in all its fullness in the Bible. I don't believe that any rational, thinking and intelligent man or woman can possibly give the Bible an honest investigation and still not believe in it. So far as I am concerned, that problem is now settled forever.

"The Scriptures are authentic, and they came by the inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, as the Bible teaches.

"Not only so, but I have learned that there are

many members who are not hypocrites, but are living up to the letter and the spirit of the Bible, according to the very best of their abilities. And there is at least one whole congregation in this city devoting itself exclusively to the principles and doctrines enunciated in the Bible. I refer to the church located on the corner of Eighth and Hill streets. You know that we have talked frequently about the young man who was crippled by a runaway team, and how a certain strange man and a young lady met their wants until the sick one was able to be left alone, while the other went back to his work."

"I remember it very well," said the father.

"You also remember my having spoken to you about having overheard some one talking so kindly to that notorious Tom Douey in such a way, just before he went to the penitentiary, that he became encouraged, and was anxious to receive his sentence at once that he might thereby get through with it the sooner. He wanted to get out and make one more good, honest effort at right living. Also, the Relief Home that is comfortably caring for more old and infirm, sick, poor and needy people than any other institution in all this city."

"I remember all these things, son. And we both agree that they ought to be the work of the churches; and that if the churches were doing these things instead of competing with each other by all means, fair and foul, for the highest social position, their work would commend itself to the honest intelligence of the community. And there would not be nearly so many unbelievers."

"But, father, I know that you will be astonished when I tell you that these are all the work of this one church."

"You don't say!"

"Yes, sir, the tall, neatly dressed, iron-gray old gentleman who waited on the young man from the time he was taken from the Emergency Hospital to his room until his partner came is the minister of that church. The two who came the next day and relieved his sufferings were himself and one of his elders. The young lady who did so much for them was Miss Emily Church, a member of the same congregation. It was this same minister who talked to Tom Douey, and it is this church that conceived, planned, built, and now maintains the Relief Home. It is this church that rid the city of the red-light evil by converting Betty Loveby and finding places for most all the girls. It was this church that completely transformed the notoriously immoral resort known as the 'Hippo Club.'"

"Why, son, you astonish me beyond measure! I had no idea that there was such a church in the land! How is it that we never heard of all these things as the work of that special congregation?"

"For the very reason, father, that you have always advocated, that is, they don't believe in bragging and boasting over what they are doing. And they don't believe in it because the Bible says: 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.'

"Father, I believe in doing all these things exactly in this spirit. The Bible teaches it, this congregation is practising it, and I cannot consistently refuse to identify myself with them in this work. This is the solution of the second problem."

"Having investigated it as you have, your conclusion certainly is logical. I don't see how you can do otherwise without doing violence to your conscience and better judgment," said the father.

"Now, as I have already anticipated, my first problem is virtually solved. The first problem was this:

When I first saw Miss Church, when she came to me on a mission of mercy, and I, without any premeditation or forethought on my part, saw in her the absolute complement to my life—that without which my work, my happiness, my life would be incomplete, unfinished, the problem came to me how can I secure this complement?

"I sought her, I found her, I loved her with all the energy of my nature. Both her words and actions told me that she loved me. Our desire for companionship was mutual. We not only loved each other, but we loved the same things and advocated the same kind and spirit of work, and were engaged in exactly the same undertaking. When she told me that she loved me to the extent that there was absolutely no room in her heart for any one else on earth, I said then, 'You will be my wife and companion through life, won't you?' She replied:

"'There is one not insurmountable obstacle, though at first it will seem so to you.'

"Shocked and paralyzed, I finally came to myself sufficiently to inquire what that obstacle could possibly be, when she said: 'Your unbelief.'

"I said, 'Aren't we engaged in the same kind of work in relieving suffering humanity? What is the difference then?'

"She said that we were. And she said, 'But why do you do these things?'

"I said it was because I thought it was right.

"She then said, 'Whom are you obeying if you do a thing simply because you yourself think it is right?'

"Of course, there was but one answer to the question, namely, I was obeying myself.

"'And,' she said, 'if you are worshipping at all, whom are you worshipping?'

"Again I had to say, 'Worshipping myself.'

"She then said: 'I also think and know that these things are right, but still that is not the reason why I do them.'

"I asked her what other reason could be given. She said, 'I do them because God, through the Scriptures, commands me to do them. By so doing, instead of obeying and worshipping myself, I am obeying and worshipping God.'

"I told her that I saw the point, and that it was well taken. But I said, 'Why should my unbelief interfere with our marriage?'

"Again she replied, 'The Bible says that we should not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.'

"'But,' I said, 'I can't believe the Bible.'

"She then said, 'But did you ever thoroughly investigate it as you would prepare for a trial in court?'

"I told her that I never had, but I would promise her that I would. And, father, that is just what I have been doing with the result already mentioned. And, mother, I now have two reasons for being happy. I am now happy over the discovery that the Bible is true. And I am happy because there remains absolutely nothing in the way of our marriage. I am so happy I want you and father to know it. I want old Ben, the horse and the dogs to know it, and I am determined that they shall."

The parents agreed with him that he had well accounted for the change that had come over him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TRUTH.

Thus we see that by making the church the home of truth that truth works every hour and moment, day and night. It works in ways that no one can sit

down and think out beforehand. It permeates every social, commercial, professional and literary avenue of life. It touches and softens the hearts of the strong, who, by virtue of their strength, are engrossed, yea, overwhelmed, with the affairs of this life.

It lifts up the bowed heads and binds up the broken hearts. It arouses the hearts and consciences of those who are engaged in sin. It silver-lines all the dark clouds consequent upon our very existence here in the world. It stays all impending storms. It settles disputes. It simplifies business problems.

The influence of any church, possessed of the truth and actuated by the same in all that it does, extends so far and in such varied ways that at times it is exceedingly difficult to take the remote effect and trace it back to its cause and source. Such a congregation has the blessed privilege of seeing and recognizing the fruits of its labors as they appear in abundant harvests all around them. Then they have the conscious satisfaction that wherever they may go, even to the ends of the earth, the influence of the truth, taught in this congregation, is extended by so much also.

Truly great men, who have been so disgusted by the frailties and shortcomings of the professed people of God with whom they have come in contact that they may have thus far absolutely refused to investigate the claims of God upon them, are nevertheless, by this direct or remote contact with these better members, consciously or unconsciously, influenced by them.

The influence may be slight, and yet strong enough to prompt them to attend a service at the church occasionally, when the influence will be strengthened.

Or the influence may be so slight as to simply cause

them to ask a question, and through the question the original impression will be strengthened.

Or the remote influence may provoke them to read the Bible, and reading may not only strengthen the original impression, but it may result in conversion.

Then through one's conversation, life and teaching, members of his immediate family, his near neighbors and many who come under his influence, may become converted.

Frequently wicked men—designedly wicked—may, through pure motives, or perchance impure motives, drop into the church services and receive such a hearty welcome, such hearty invitations to come again and bring friends and see so little to criticize in connection with the services that they will receive sufficient impression to prompt them to go back to their haunts of sin and tell about it. They themselves may attend again. But if they don't themselves, their telling about it may put others present to thinking about it. So this influence, in its ramifications, is clearly finding its way into nooks and corners hitherto untouched.

As the sun, in his shining, shows no partiality, but shines alike upon the bald knobs, barren peaks, desolate plains, as well as the fertile stretches, burdened with abundant harvests, so a true church, to imitate Christ in making it rain upon the just and the unjust, must be interested in men of every possible class. This is the kind of a church that the apostle compares to a stone building "fitly put together."

We know that it is impossible to have a building of any kind whatever without a foundation of some kind. And while the foundation depends, in a measure, upon the superstructure, still more depends upon the foundation than upon the superstructure.

For instance, the superstructure may be a thing of

beauty and strength; every beam and post connected and supported firmly; so strong that it is next to impossible to separate one part from the other. Still, if the foundation is not what it should be, if it is of sand, when the storms come, the winds blow, the rain descends and beats upon the house, it will fall because built upon the sand.

But though the superstructure may not be so strong, still, if the foundation is what it should be, it will stand. The permanence of a building necessarily depends then, if not entirely, upon the foundation.

The permanence of a building may also depend upon the material worked into the building. If it is wood, hay and stubble, when the fiery trials come, it will be consumed.

But, though the material may be proper, yet if it is not properly shaped and fashioned, when the storms come, it is easily thrown down.

Though the material may be all right, properly shaped and fashioned, still the building may lack permanence if it is not put together orderly, every stone in its proper place.

Though the material may be good, properly shaped and fashioned and put together in perfect order, yet the building may lack permanence if the several parts are not so firmly connected together that it is next to impossible to separate one part from another.

Even though all the parts are firmly connected together and though the foundation be broad, deep and immovable, yet if the superstructure, as a whole, is not so firmly fastened to this immovable foundation that it is impossible to separate them, the building will lack permanence.

But if we have a building composed of stone, properly shaped and fashioned, put together in proper order, firmly connected together, and the whole super-

structure, as such, inseparably fastened to an immovable foundation, withstanding the rains, floods, winds and storms, then we have the Bible idea of the church, with Christ as the broad, immovable foundation, the superstructure composed of the members, properly convinced, convicted and converted, all knowing and occupying their own respective places, so thoroughly bound together that it is impossible to separate one from another, and the membership, as a whole, inseparably connected with Christ in love.

Such is the Eighth and Hill church. And just as long as it remains such all the infidelity, skepticism, atheism and sin in the world combined can never, never, never prevail against it.

CHAPTER XXV.

BACK AT THE SPRING. . .

All who knew him were not only astonished at the amount of work that Judge Gross accomplished, but also the speed and thoroughness of the same. The secret of it all, however, was in his power of concentration—his faculty of becoming absolutely lost to everything in the world except the subject directly under consideration. This it was that frequently enabled him to accomplish wonders in a surprisingly short time.

And his mental energies never have been, and perhaps never will be, exerted more nearly to their full strength than they were while solving the problem: "Are the Scriptures authentic, and did they come by the inspiration of God?" The problem solved, he manifested as much impatience to get to the spring again as a colt would to be let out into a green pasture.

Seated once more in the enchanted natural seat of the old sycamore, they both faced about. The expression of his face was that of one who had good news, but had so much to tell and so little time in which to tell it that he scarcely knew where to begin.

Hers was that bright, cheerful, hopeful expression of confidence.

Finally, as by way of introduction, he said:

"I am indeed glad to be here again!"

"This place, because of associations and sweet memories, has almost become a sacred spot to me," said she.

Everything was life about them. The earth, with its springtime carpet of green and flowers; the trees, with their fresh, green tint and full-grown foliage; the winds moaning aloud in the heavy forest-covered hills not far away, modifying somewhat, as they passed through the tree tops above them, toning down into soft zephyrs as they spent themselves in the open fields beyond; the alluringly cool, green depths about them, through which the spring ran, giving forth its splashing and gurgling sound; the whole clump of trees (overlooked by the generous and well-meaning landlord) literally an aviary with birds of many kinds, from the large, black crow that sat on the trees as close as he thought it safe to venture, and looked down upon them with inquisitive eyes, endeavoring to charm them by his occasional rasping caw, caw! to the sweet, bronzed little humming-bird that balanced its little body in mid-air with its tiny wings, while, with long but almost invisible beak, it sucked honey from the flowers, at the same time singing its dainty little song—all this seemed to have been nature's preparation for this final meeting!

They both seemed to realize it. They seemed to be charmed. They seemed to be under a spell!

"Is not this the most charming day that any one ever experienced?" said he.

"If I had it in my power to change it, I think I would leave it just as it is," said she.

"Judge Gross, I noticed that you were present to hear Elder Guide the other evening. I hope that he said nothing to drive you farther away from the kingdom, or in any way interfere with your investigation."

"No, indeed; on the contrary, it was a wonderful discourse. It was wonderful in the theme selected and in the text chosen. It was wonderful in its preparation—the amount of information that it contained and wonderful in its effects upon the audience. At first I was just a little disturbed at the interference of old Doc Spondug. But when I saw how skilfully and, at the same time, how kindly Elder Guide handled the situation, I was glad it happened."

"Were you really?"

"I certainly was, for the reason that it was a wonderful lesson for the entire audience in dealing with difficult situations. And, as I have learned since, it made a greater impression upon old Doc himself and those who came with him than upon any others. For I hear that he has been to see the minister, apologized, promised to come to hear him regularly, has cleaned up and refurnished his office, and has had Elder Guide come and visit him."

"He has, and they tell me that the so-called 'Hippo Club' is not at all what it was before."

Conversation about these things was interesting, indeed, to her, because they indicated the progress of the church; but deep down in her heart there was a question burning like a flame of fire! She wanted to ask it, and she wanted him to answer it.

At the last meeting he was on the anxious seat,

wanting to hear the pleasant surprise that she had for him.

To-day she is on the anxious seat, wanting to know what progress he has made in his investigations.

She would say in her heart, "Certainly, he has made some progress, or he would not speak so favorably of Elder Guide and his work. And, in fact, he doesn't look the former man of trouble or indecision. His face seems to possess the glow of one rejoicing in some great accomplishment. But, oh, why don't he say something?"

Finally, leaning toward him, she laid her hand gently on his arm, and, looking up into his face with her great, questioning but confident blue eyes, she said:

"You do look so reconciled and so happy; haven't you a happy surprise for me to-day?"

With an expression fully in keeping with that of her own, he said:

"I told you that I would do my utmost to have a great surprise for you to-day, as you had for me at our last meeting."

"I know you did, and I knew that you would at least make an honest effort to do so."

"I have never been more honest, earnest and vigorous in an investigation than I have in that of the Bible."

Her face flushed, her heart beat more rapidly and pounded harder and louder as the thought of his having failed finally to accept the Scriptures shot through her mind!

After a long, significant pause, during which he studiously looked into her face, and, finally seeing real pain in her expression, to alleviate which he broke the oppressive silence by saying:

"Every chapter that I read sounded like you talk-

ing. I declare to you it seems to me that it comes almost as natural for you to talk in Scripture language as it does for me to talk in our English vernacular. I had often wondered how you could live the beautiful, pure and stainless life that you are living. But in my investigation I learned that your life is simply a reflection of the Scripture lessons. That your life is a living and continuous illustration of the lessons that you learn from the Word of God."

"Oh, then you——?"

"I found that the Bible contains no contradictions."

"Then you ac——?"

"That it contains no inconsistencies."

"Oh, joy, joy!" she said in her heart. "I do believe in my soul that he is convinced."

"I found the Old Testament to be a book of types, shadows, symbols, promises, predictions and prophecies, whose antetype, substance and fulfillment are contained in the New Testament. That the patriarchs and the Jews were under the Old Testament and the Christians are under the New. That on the Mount of Transfiguration Moses, representing the law, and Elijah, representing the prophets, appeared and, as it were, laid their authority at the feet of Jesus. For God was heard speaking from heaven, saying: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him.' That is to say, 'You have heard Moses and the prophets hitherto, but henceforth you are to be under the teaching of the Son.' To us the lessons contained in the Old Testament are written for our learning, for our example."

"Oh, then you bel——?"

"The book, as a whole, is complete, perfect and harmonious. It is as true as complete—it is true in all its parts—it is God's plan of salvation; it is the way to heaven, and I believe it with all my heart, soul,

mind and strength, and" (both rising to their feet and lifting their hands high and throwing them back) "I propose to lay my time, talents, means, life and all upon the altar of sacrifice for Christ." As he finished speaking, they both literally fell into each other's arms.

And no one knows the utter futility of human speech until he attempts to describe the joy of two hearts on an occasion like this after prolonged anticipation!

After they stood for some moments in profound silence, so profound that even their heart throbs could be heard, he said, with a voice somewhat choked with emotion:

"Now, my dear, you will be my wife, won't you?"

With her head still on his breast, with her arms still clinging about him and his about her, she turns her beautiful eyes, that had so completely charmed him from the very beginning, up to him and poised her beautiful red lips two or three times, as if in an endeavor to speak, but could not. Instead, she clung the closer to him.

"My love, what is it that troubles you so much?"

"Judge Gross, I was held in suspense so long. I came to be so afraid as you were making your statement that you were not going to become a believer, and then I would not only miss your companionship through life, but your precious soul would be lost! And I could not recover from the awful thought! I was speechless for the moment!"

"It does grieve me so much that I caused you a moment's pain," said he.

"It is all over now, and the pain that I have caused you by having you wait all these weeks and the shock through which I have just passed will only endear us to each other."

"Then you will be my wife?"

"My dear, I would not have it otherwise for a thousand worlds like this," she said.

Then for the first time did he press her sweet lips to his own for a long time, then repeated it.

"I am happy now," said he. "The world looks brighter to me than ever before! Nothing but sunshine and flowers, and sweet-scented fragrance! I love everybody! I want all to be good and happy! I want all to be saved! And I know that this is the desire of your sweet soul, too, for you have told me as much."

We will not attempt to report their conversation homeward that afternoon. Neither will we attempt to describe the joy of their lives. But we will allow the reader to let his imagination run and continue to run until it absolutely fails in a vain effort to fathom the deep joys of these two hearts.

CHAPTER XXVI.

GREAT REJOICING AT THE CHURCH.

Miss Church's faith in God's Word and unbounded confidence in his promises to answer prayer was such that even if she had not conferred with Nevin Gross beforehand she would think that everything would finally work out all right. But still it was only human for her to feel anxious and continue to hope and pray earnestly as the time approached.

When she appeared at the church on Lord's Day morning and saw the great audience—Judge Gross among them—she could not help but feel certain that all was well.

Had she not known that he was done with his in-

vestigation, she might have thought that he was still in the midst of it and that he was present now simply to watch the working of the church to see whether it was in keeping with what he had read in the Bible. Or, perhaps, that he had come to hear Elder Guide discourse upon some phase of, or some lesson in, the Bible with the hope that he might get some points that would help him in his investigation.

But she felt now—she knew—all was well. She thought everything looked better and all looked more happy than she had ever seen them. She could speak for herself. And she knew that she was more happy than ever before.

She caught one of Judge Gross' glances, and she imagined that he looked more perfectly reconciled than she had ever seen him. His face was not that of a troubled man, of one in the midst of the haze of an unsolved problem, but the face of a conqueror, a victor. As one just returned from a long, tedious journey, and now rejoicing exceedingly in a much-needed and well-earned rest.

Without intending it, or even appearing to do so, many and very many heads slightly turned in the direction of Judge Gross. All of the city being critics, he was easily the most brilliant man in the city. And his face, together with his most commanding personality, might have caused the members of this congregation to give him special attention had it not been for the other fact that the Bible plainly teaches that they are to be no respecters of persons. That they are to give their attention to the less distinguished.

Elder Guide was at his best this morning. Was the presence of Judge Gross an inspiration to him? No one could possibly tell. Elder Guide could not tell himself. But presumably he would admit that the

presence of such an immense concourse of people as he had before him at this time would necessarily give him a kind of momentary inspiration.

He was exceedingly fortunate in the selection of his theme this morning—"The Book."

And his text: "Study to show thyself approved unto God; a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth."

As was his custom, he made his discourse fairly bristle with strong points and deep thoughts. His sermon showed indefatigable labor and prodigious study in its preparation. He was not only a student and thinker, but he was eloquent with all. Not a studied and stilted eloquence, but that which comes from a heart deeply in earnest and on fire for souls. Then there is a kind of acquired eloquence that comes through abundant preparation.

This was especially true with Elder Guide. Because when he appeared before an audience, when he finished a point in his discourse, it was the feeling of every one present that the point was not only well taken and thoroughly established, but that he had ten times as much more thought concerning that point in reserve, and that he could have presented more if it had been necessary or if he had had time.

This was true of all the points that he attempted to make. And if this was true on other occasions, and in the discussion of other themes, it was doubly so on this occasion and in the discussion of the subject of "The Book."

He closed with a wonderful description of the future home of the redeemed. He quoted the Savior's own language:

"In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for

you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there ye may be also."

He said:

"Home is one of the sweetest words in all the English language! It carries with it the idea of a stopping place, rest, comfort and the association of the nearest and dearest friends.

"But 'mansion' carries with it all the above, and in addition the idea of permanence, beauty, grandeur, magnificence and abundance of room. And when the Savior says, 'In my Father's house [home] there are many *mansions,*' we cannot help but get the idea of that of a mansion emphasized, for aught we know, a thousand times, or it may be ten thousand times ten thousand millions of times. At any rate, Paul, in speaking of the same future abode of the redeemed and glorified of earth, after having spoken of it by various comparisons, similitudes and figures of speech, throws up his hands, as it were, in despair at the inadequacy of language, and in one of the grandest perorations that ever flowed from human tongue he declares that it is exceedingly abundant, more than we can ask or think.' And, with this thought in mind, he sums up his own determination in one of the grandest climaxes that has ever appeared in any language or all languages combined, asking, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?' As it is written, 'For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us.' 'For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us

from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.'

"And finally, becoming so absorbed in his theme, he is not conscious of pains and the sting of death, and looks forward to the time when he shall stand upon the shores of Eternal Bliss, when he can look back upon death and the empty grave and sing that song of eternal victory, 'O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? Death is swallowed up in Victory.'

"Then John, looking forward to the final consummation of all things, speaks of the future abode of all the redeemed as a city whose foundations are twelve, of non-combustible material, of such variety and so arranged as to present a thing of beauty and permanence—a city through which the river of the water of life flows; a city in which the Tree of Life grows, bearing twelve manner of fruits, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. A city whose inhabitants are God, Christ, the angels of heaven and all the redeemed and glorified of earth; a city in which sin shall never enter. Hence, none of the fruits of sin —no sickness, no sorrow, no pain and no death—nothing but everlasting peace and eternal satisfaction."

Then, as a man thoroughly under the spell of his own wonderful thoughts, he represented the people of all nations coming from the East and West, from the North and the South to sit down in the kingdom of the Eternal Father with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. Then he called upon the audience to decide now in favor of that future home.

The audience arose and the song commenced, and when Judge Nevin Gross went forward, a partial head taller than any man in the audience, no greater religious sensation was ever produced. Not simply because he was the greatest man, in every sense

of the term, in all the city, but because it was almost universally understood that he was an unbeliever!

The rejoicing of the entire congregation was, indeed, profound. Their only object was to lead men and women to Christ. And they could not help but think what the presence of such talent and such power meant to their work. It not only meant his own salvation, but the salvation of so many whom they never could reach without him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

NEVIN GROSS' STATEMENT.

After the song Judge Gross was seen to approach the minister and speak to him. Thereupon the minister stated that this was Judge Gross, of whom all had doubtless heard, and whom many had seen and heard of some of his wonderful efforts in the cause of right and justice.

"I speak freely, for while I have never known him personally, yet I know him well by reputation. And his reputation is that he cannot be flattered, he takes nothing for granted, and the fact that he has presented himself to-day to confess his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and identify himself with the people of God, worshipping at this place, bespeaks the fact that the Book and the cause that we all love better than we do our own lives has been subjected to the severest tests possible. And because our 'waybill' from earth to heaven has stood the test our membership is now to be reinforced by as able a man as ever stood before an audience. You all know of him as a temperance man. The saloon element never has and never will meet a more formidable opponent. And in the courts his reputation is that of a 'Champion of the right.'

"Now, I know that you all feel just as I do, that we can do so much more with his assistance than without it. He desires to speak a few words to the congregation."

As he lifted his great, athletic form before them, and they were permitted to look into his classic face before he said a word, the whole audience was impressed. They realized that they were in the presence of a superior.

After letting the light of his gracious countenance rest upon them for a few moments, he began by saying:

"No doubt, you have all heard me spoken of as an unbeliever, which was correct. I thought I was. I advocated certain principles of justice, mercy and right because I thought and knew them to be right. Not seeing these principles taught and lived up to by church members generally with whom I came in contact (until recently), I opposed the churches. I opposed the weaknesses, frailties and shortcomings of the church members, and thought I was opposing the Bible. But recently I have inadvertently come in contact with a number of the members of this congregation who, for special reasons—the salvation of my soul among others—informed me that you are doing the very things that I have always believed in and advocated. And they astonished me by saying that they were not doing them because I believed in them, neither because they themselves believed in them. And, in my state of mind, at the time, I could not think of any other reason for which honest people could do a thing.

"But, upon inquiry, they gave me the simple, straightforward answer, which, upon the whole, was the most rational answer that I ever heard to any question, that is, they did it because God, through

His Word, commanded them to do it. They told me that the Bible taught everything that I advocated and condemned everything that I condemned, and asked me if I had ever investigated the Bible. I told them that I had not, but that I would.

"I am here to-day to report the result of as honest, earnest and thorough investigation of the Bible as I was capable of giving. And my conclusion without any reservations, mental or otherwise, is that the Bible is *the* Book. The Book of all books. The Book that stands out by itself, beyond and above all the books that have ever been written. Without a single contradiction, inconsistency or incongruity within its sacred lids, but one grand, complete, perfect and symmetrical whole. That it is the oldest and best Book in the world. Translated into more languages and read by more people than any book that has ever been written. It contains the origin, history, and the final destiny of man—man as he was, man as he is, and man as he shall be, are the three grand themes treated upon in this Blessed Book. It reveals to us God in His relation as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in His great work of creation, providence and redemption.

"It addresses itself to men of every possible class—the strong and the weak, the wise and the simple, the oppressor and the oppressed, the husband and the wife, the parents and the children, the saved and the unsaved. It calls attention, either directly or indirectly to every sin that it is possible for man to commit, connects a warning therewith and places a penalty in sight. It calls attention, either directly or remotely, to every duty that it is possible for man to perform and places a reward in sight. It calls attention to man's duty in all of its minutiæ. What a Book? How we should love it! Then let's make it

as sandals to our feet, raiment to our persons, a chain about our necks, a crown upon our heads, a lamp to our feet, a light to our pathway, our rock, our fortress, our exceeding high tower, our place of refuge in every time of need! For,

"A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic as the sun.
It gives a light to every age,
It gives but borrows none.

"The hand that gave it still supplies
This gracious light and heat;
Its truths upon the nations rise—
They rise but never set.

"Therefore I say:

"Though all the forms that men devise
Assault this Book with cunning art,
I'd call them vanities and lies,
And bind the Bible to my heart."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TRUTH.

As he spoke the last word, he pressed a Bible that he held in his hand to his heart. And the tactful minister, taking advantage of this psychological moment and to make the best possible use of the wonderful impression that his statement had made, through tears and with suppressed voice, asked: "In the light of what you have just heard, is there an unsaved person in the house who is not now willing to take this wonderful Book as his guide through life? Come while we sing."

They were seen to come from all parts of the house. It was the beginning of a revival whose influ-

ence reached to the remotest bounds of the city and even beyond. There was not a person in the city engaged in a legitimate business but what was encouraged. And there was not one engaged in an illegitimate business but what was discouraged by the influence of this meeting.

When Judge Gross drove home a few days later, rejoicing in the pardon of all his past sins, the comforting influence of the Holy Spirit and the bright and glorious hope of heaven with all that heaven means, and the most precious jewel of earth with him, to walk by his side through life, he was as happy as it is possible for a man to be in this world.

But in all this, old Ben must be reckoned with as a close second. For upon "Marse Nevin's" approach with his beautiful bride, while Ben said nothing until he was spoken to, his eyes and face spoke volumes. He verily thought that it was as much his victory as it was that of the Judge. He, in his simple honesty, thought that the part that he performed in keeping Roanoke in the best of condition, was just as important as the part that the Judge performed. Ben could not think for a single moment that "Marse Nevin" would have ever succeeded, had he not helped him. And the Judge was perfectly willing that he should think so.

"And this is Ben, who saved your life," said the bride to her husband.

"Yes, that is Ben, and one of my best friends, too," said he.

"I am glad to see you, Ben, and I hope that we will be good friends, too," said she.

"Yass'm, yass'm," said Ben, and went away as happy as if he, too, had found a bride.

THE END.

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